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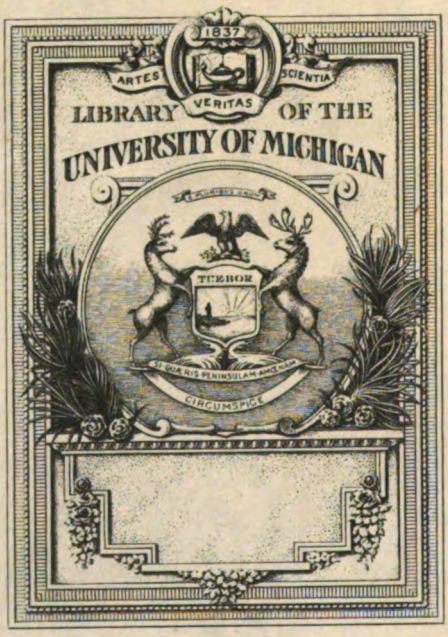
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THE

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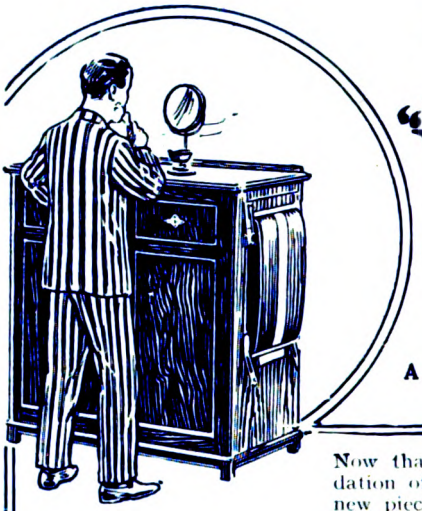
THE STRAND MAGAZINE

The Adventure of
THE THREE GARRIDEBS
BY
A. CONAN DOYLE



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THE STRAND MAGAZINE is printed by the Newnes and Pearson Printing Co., Ltd., N. Kensington, and published monthly by the Proprietors, George Newnes, Ltd., 8 to 11, Southampton Street, Strand, London, England. Subscription price to any part of the world, post free, for one year, 15s. (Canada, 13s. 6d.). Registered at the General Post Office for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Entered as Second-class Matter at the New York, N.Y., Post Office. Cases for binding volumes of THE STRAND MAGAZINE may be obtained to order from Booksellers for 2s. 6d., or post free for 2s. 10d. direct from the Office. Half-yearly Volumes, 7s. 6d. net.

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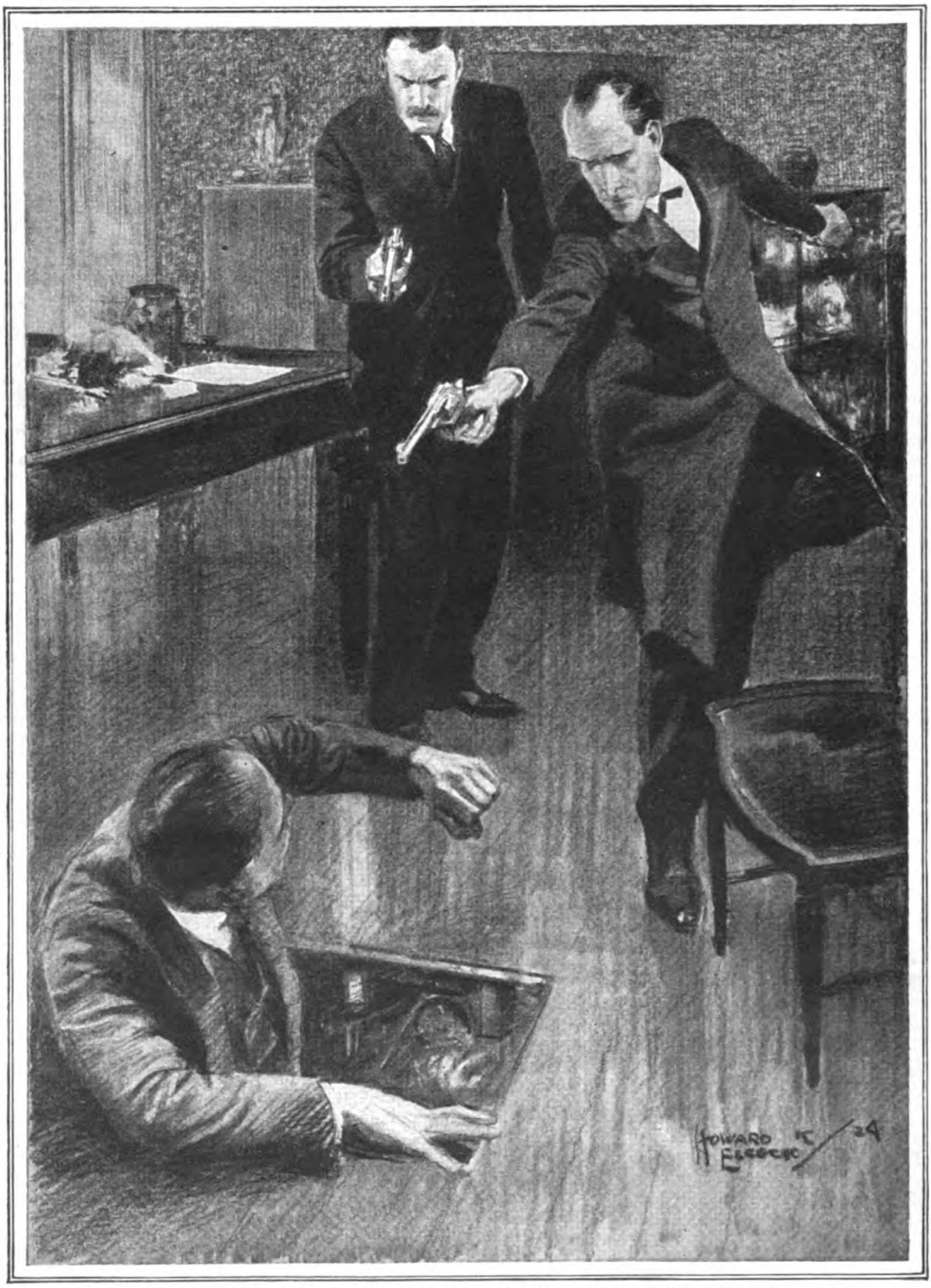

HIS FACE TURNED UPON US WITH A GLARE OF BAFFLED RAGE, WHICH GRADUALLY SOFTENED INTO A RATHER SHAMEFACED GRIN AS HE REALIZED THAT TWO PISTOLS WERE POINTED AT HIS HEAD.

(See page 12.)

THE ADVENTURE OF THE THREE GARRIDEBS

A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY

BY

A. Conan Doyle

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD ELCOCK

IT may have been a comedy, or it may have been a tragedy. It cost one man his reason, it cost me a blood-letting, and it cost yet another man the penalties of the law. Yet there was certainly an element of comedy. Well, you shall judge for yourselves.

I remember the date very well, for it was in the same month that Holmes refused a knighthood for services which may perhaps some day be described. I only refer to the matter in passing, for in my position of partner and confidant I am obliged to be particularly careful to avoid any indiscretion. I repeat, however, that this enables me to fix the date, which was the latter end of June, 1902, shortly after the conclusion of the South African War. Holmes had spent several days in bed, as was his habit from time to time, but he emerged that morning with a long foolscap document in his hand and a twinkle of amusement in his austere grey eyes.

"There is a chance for you to make some money, friend Watson," said he. "Have you ever heard the name of Garrideb?"

I admitted that I had not.

"Well, if you can lay your hand upon a Garrideb, there's money in it."

"Why?"

"Ah, that's a long story—rather a whimsical one, too. I don't think in all our explorations of human complexities we have ever come upon anything more singular. The fellow will be here presently for cross-examination, so I won't open the matter up till he comes. But meanwhile, that's the name we want."

The telephone directory lay on the table beside me, and I turned over the pages in a rather hopeless quest. But to my amazement there was this strange name in its due place. I gave a cry of triumph.

"Here you are, Holmes! Here it is!"

Holmes took the book from my hand.

"'Garrideb, N.,'" he read, "'136, Little Ryder Street, W.' Sorry to disappoint you, my dear Watson, but this is the man himself. That is the address upon his letter. We want another to match him."

Mrs. Hudson had come in with a card upon a tray. I took it up and glanced at it.

"Why, here it is!" I cried in amazement. "This is a different initial. John Garrideb, Counsellor at Law, Moorville, Kansas, U.S.A."

Holmes smiled as he looked at the card. "I am afraid you must make yet another effort, Watson," said he. "This gentleman is also in the plot already, though I certainly

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did not expect to see him this morning. However, he is in a position to tell us a good deal which I want to know."

A moment later he was in the room. Mr. John Garrideb, Counsellor at Law, was a short, powerful man with the round, fresh, clean-shaven face characteristic of so many American men of affairs. The general effect was chubby and rather childlike, so that one received the impression of quite a young man with a broad set smile upon his face. His eyes, however, were arresting. Seldom in any human head have I seen a pair which bespoke a more intense inward life, so bright were they, so alert, so responsive to every change of thought. His accent was American, but was not accompanied by any eccentricity of speech.

"Mr. Holmes?" he asked, glancing from one to the other. "Ah, yes! Your pictures are not unlike you, sir, if I may say so. I believe you have had a letter from my namesake, Mr. Nathan Garrideb, have you not?"

"Pray sit down," said Sherlock Holmes. "We shall, I fancy, have a good deal to discuss." He took up his sheets of foolscap. "You are, of course, the Mr. John Garrideb mentioned in this document. But surely you have been in England some time?"

"Why do you say that, Mr. Holmes?" I seemed to read sudden suspicion in those expressive eyes.

"Your whole outfit is English."

Mr. Garrideb forced a laugh. "I've read of your tricks, Mr. Holmes, but I never thought I would be the subject of them. Where do you read that?"

"The shoulder cut of your coat, the toes of your boots—could anyone doubt it?"

"Well, well, I had no idea I was so obvious a Britisher. But business brought me over here some time ago, and so, as you say, my outfit is nearly all London. However, I guess your time is of value, and we did not meet to talk about the cut of my socks. What about getting down to that paper you hold in your hand?"

Holmes had in some way ruffled our visitor, whose chubby face had assumed a far less amiable expression.

"Patience! Patience, Mr. Garrideb!" said my friend in a soothing voice. "Dr. Watson would tell you that these little digressions of mine sometimes prove in the end to have some bearing on the matter. But why did Mr. Nathan Garrideb not come with you?"

"Why did he ever drag you into it at all?" asked our visitor, with a sudden outflame of anger. "What in thunder had you to do with it? Here was a bit of professional business between two gentlemen, and one of them must needs call in a detective! I saw him this morning, and he told me this fool-trick he had played me, and that's why I am here. But I feel bad about it, all the same."

"There was no reflection upon you, Mr. Garrideb. It was simply zeal upon his part to gain your end—an end which is, I understand, equally vital for both of you. He knew that I had means of getting information, and, therefore, it was very natural that he should apply to me."

Our visitor's angry face gradually cleared.

"Well, that puts it different," said he. "When I went to see him this morning and he told me he had sent to a detective, I just asked for your address and came right away. I don't want police butting into a private matter. But if you are content just to help us find the man, there can be no harm in that."

"Well, that is just how it stands," said Holmes. "And now, sir, since you are here, we had best have a clear account from your own lips. My friend here knows nothing of the details."

Mr. Garrideb surveyed me with not too friendly a gaze.

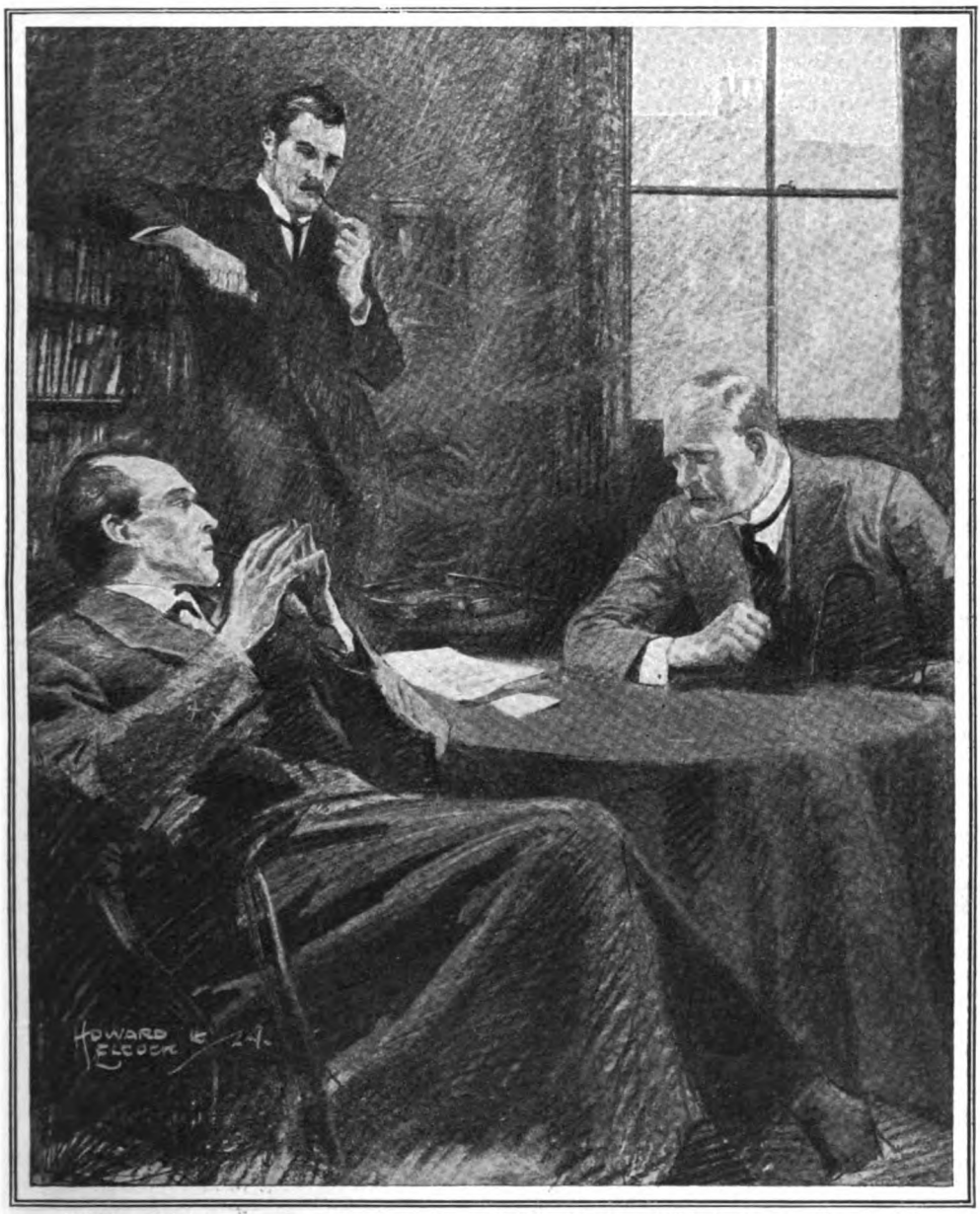
"Need he know?" he asked.

"We usually work together."

"Well, there's no reason it should be kept a secret. I'll give you the facts as short as I can make them. If you came from Kansas I would not need to explain to you who Alexander Hamilton Garrideb was. He made his money in real estate, and afterwards in the wheat pit at Chicago, but he spent it in buying up as much land as would make one of your counties, lying along the Arkansas River, west of Fort Dodge. It's grazing land and lumber land and arable land and mineralized land, and just every sort of land that brings dollars to the man that owns it.

"He had no kith nor kin—or, if he had, I never heard of it. But he took a kind of pride in the queerness of his name. That was what brought us together. I was in the law at Topeka, and one day I had a visit from the old man, and he was tickled to death to meet another man with his own name. It was his pet fad, and he was dead set to find out if there were any more Garridebs in the world. 'Find me another!' said he. I told him I was a busy man and could not spend my life hiking round the world in search of Garridebs. 'None the less,' said he, 'that is just what you will do if things pan out as I planned them.' I thought he was joking, but there was a powerful lot of meaning in the words, as I was soon to discover.

"For he died within a year of saying them, and he left a will behind him. It was the queerest will that has ever been filed in the



"Why did he ever drag you into it at all, Mr. Holmes?" asked our visitor, with a sudden outflame of anger. "What in thunder had you to do with it?"

State of Kansas. His property was divided into three parts, and I was to have one on condition that I found two Garridebs who would share the remainder. It's five million dollars for each if it is a cent, but we can't lay a finger on it until we all three stand in a row.

"It was so big a chance that I just let my legal practice slide and I set forth looking for Garridebs. There is not one in the United States. I went through it, sir, with a fine-toothed comb and never a Garrideb could I catch. Then I tried the old country. Sure enough there was the name in the London Telephone Directory. I went after him two days ago and explained the whole matter to him. But he is a lone man, like myself, with some women relations, but

no men. It says three adult men in the will. So you see we still have a vacancy, and if you can help to fill it we will be very ready to pay your charges."

"Well, Watson," said Holmes, with a smile, "I said it was rather whimsical, did I not? I should have thought, sir, that your obvious way was to advertise in the agony columns of the papers."

"I have done that, Mr. Holmes. No replies."

"Dear me! Well, it is certainly a most curious little problem. I may take a glance at it in my leisure. By the way, it is curious that you should have come from Topeka. I used to have a correspondent—he is dead now—old Dr. Lysander Starr, who was Mayor in 1890."

"Good old Dr. Starr!" said our visitor. "His name is still honoured. Well, Mr. Holmes, I suppose all we can do is to report to you and let you know how we progress. I reckon you will hear within a day or two." With this assurance our American bowed and departed.

HOLMES had lit his pipe, and he sat for some time with a curious smile upon his face.

"Well?" I asked at last.

"I am wondering, Watson—just wondering!"

"At what?"

Holmes took his pipe from his lips.

"I was wondering, Watson, what on earth could be the object of this man in telling us such a rigmarole of lies. I nearly asked him so—for there are times when a brutal frontal attack is the best policy—but I judged it better to let him think he had fooled us. Here is a man with an English coat frayed at the elbow and trousers bagged at the knee with a year's wear, and yet by this document and by his own account he is a provincial American lately landed in London. There have been no advertisements in the agony columns. You know that I miss nothing there. They are my favourite covert for putting up a bird, and I would never have overlooked such a cock pheasant as that. I never knew a Dr. Lysander Starr of Topeka. Touch him where you would he was false. I think the fellow is really an American, but he has worn his accent smooth with years of London. What is his game, then, and what motive lies behind this preposterous search for Garridebs? It's worth our attention, for, granting that the man is a rascal, he is certainly a complex and ingenious one. We must now find out if our other correspondent is a fraud also. Just ring him up, Watson."

I did so, and heard a thin, quavering voice at the other end of the line.

"Yes, yes, I am Mr. Nathan Garrideb. Is Mr. Holmes there? I should very much like to have a word with Mr. Holmes."

My friend took the instrument and I heard the usual syncopated dialogue.

"Yes, he has been here. I understand that you don't know him. . . . How long? . . . Only two days! . . . Yes, yes, of course, it is a most captivating prospect. Will you be at home this evening? I suppose your namesake will not be there? . . . Very good, we will come then, for I would rather have a chat without him. . . . Dr. Watson will come with me. . . . I understood from your note that you did not go out often. . . . Well, we shall be round about six. You need not mention it to the American lawyer. . . . Very good. Good-bye!"

It was twilight of a lovely spring evening, and even Little Ryder Street, one of the smaller offshoots from the Edgware Road, within a stone-cast of old Tyburn Tree of evil memory, looked golden and wonderful in the slanting rays of the setting sun. The particular house to which we were directed was a large, old-fashioned, Early Georgian edifice with a flat brick face broken only by two deep bay windows on the ground floor. It was on this ground floor that our client lived, and, indeed, the low windows proved to be the front of the huge room in which he spent his waking hours. Holmes pointed as we passed to the small brass plate which bore the curious name.

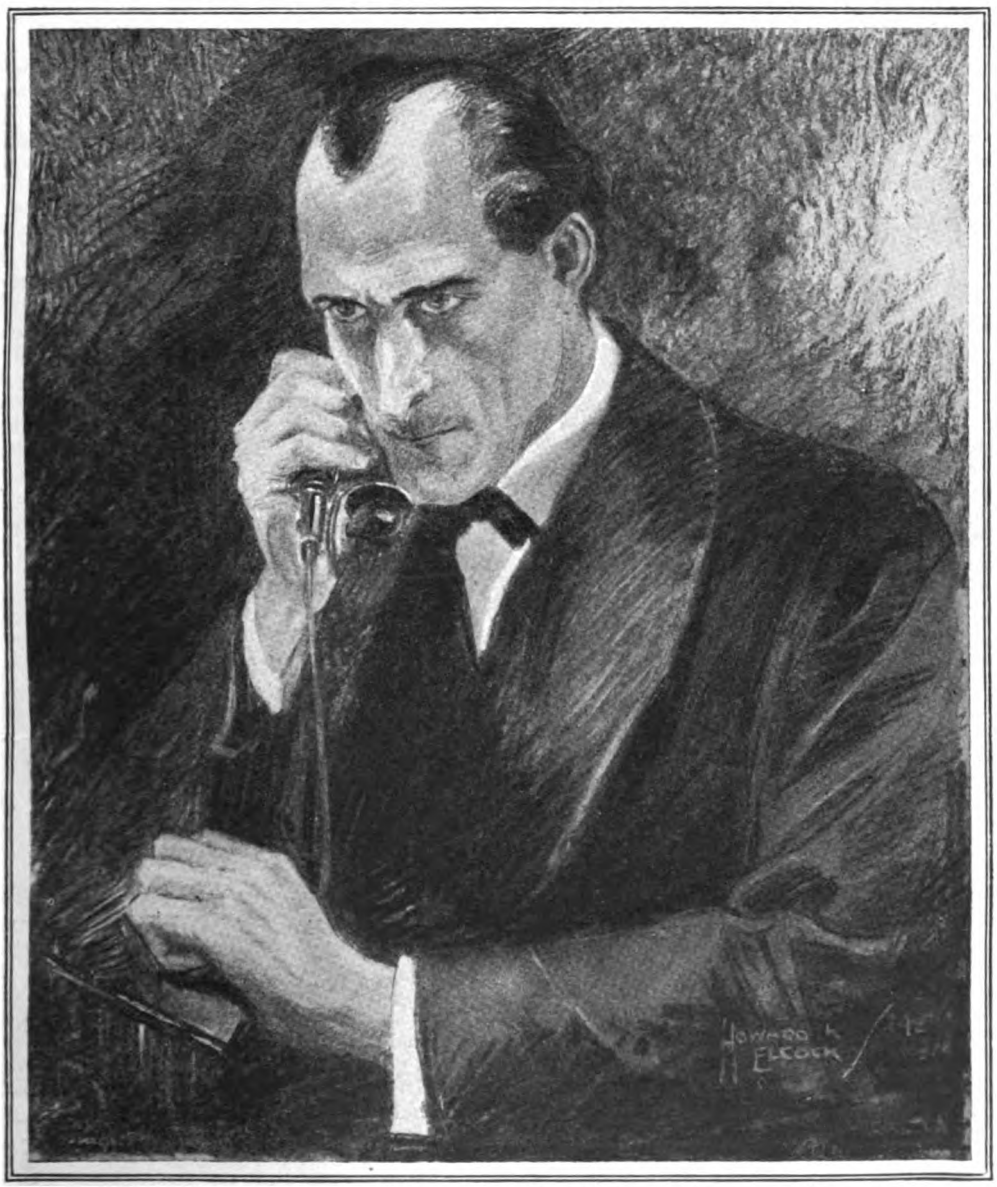
"Up some years, Watson," he remarked, indicating its discoloured surface. "It's *his* real name, anyhow, and that is something to note."

The house had a common stair, and there were a number of names painted in the hall, some indicating offices and some private chambers. It was not a collection of residential flats, but rather the abode of Bohemian bachelors. Our client opened the door for us himself and apologized by saying that the woman in charge left at four o'clock. Mr. Nathan Garrideb proved to be a very tall, loose-jointed, round-backed person, gaunt and bald, some sixty-odd years of age. He had a cadaverous face, with the dull dead skin of a man to whom exercise was unknown. Large round spectacles and a small projecting goat's beard combined with his stooping attitude to give him an expression of peering curiosity. The general effect, however, was amiable, though eccentric.

The room was as curious as its occupant. It looked like a small museum. It was both broad and deep, with cupboards and cabinets all round, crowded with specimens, geological and anatomical. Cases of butterflies and moths flanked each side of the entrance. A large table in the centre was

littered with all sorts of *débris*, while the tall brass tube of a powerful microscope bristled up amongst them. As I glanced round I was surprised at the universality of the man's interests. Here was a case of ancient coins. There was a cabinet of flint instruments. Behind his central table was a large cupboard of fossil bones. Above was a line of plaster skulls with such names as "Neanderthal," "Heidelberg," "Cromagnan" printed beneath them. It was clear that he was a student of many subjects. As he stood in front of us now, he held a piece of chamois leather in his right hand with which he was polishing a coin.

"Syracusan—of the best period," he explained, holding it up. "They degenerated greatly towards the end. At their best I hold them supreme, though some prefer the Alexandrian school. You will find a chair here, Mr. Holmes. Pray allow me to clear these bones. And you, sir—ah, yes, Dr. Watson—if you would have the goodness to put the Japanese vase to one



"Well, we shall be round about six. Dr. Watson will come with me."

side. You see round me my little interests in life. My doctor lectures me about never going out, but why should I go out when I have so much to hold me here? I can assure you that the adequate cataloguing of one of those cabinets would take me three good months."

Holmes looked round him with curiosity.

"But do you tell me that you *never* go out?" he said.

"Now and again I drive down to Sotheby's or Christie's. Otherwise I very seldom leave my room. I am not too strong, and my researches are very absorbing. But you can imagine, Mr. Holmes, what a terrific shock—pleasant but terrific—it was for me when I heard of this unparalleled good fortune. It only needs one more Garrideb to complete the matter, and surely we can find one. I had a brother, but he is dead, and female relatives are disqualified. But there must surely be others in the world. I had heard that you handled strange cases, and that was why I sent to you. Of course, this American gentleman is quite right, and I should have taken his advice first, but I acted for the best."

"I think you acted very wisely indeed," said Holmes. "But are you really anxious to acquire an estate in America?"

"Certainly not, sir. Nothing would induce me to leave my collection. But this gentleman has assured me that he will buy me out as soon as we have established our claim. Five million dollars was the sum named. There are a dozen specimens in the market at the present moment which fill gaps in my collection, and which I am unable to purchase for want of a few hundred pounds. Just think what I could do with five million dollars. Why, I have the nucleus of a national collection. I shall be the Hans Sloane of my age."

His eyes gleamed behind his great spectacles. It was very clear that no pains would be spared by Mr. Nathan Garrideb in finding a namesake.

"I merely called to make your acquaintance, and there is no reason why I should interrupt your studies," said Holmes. "I prefer to establish personal touch with those with whom I do business. There are few questions I need ask, for I have your very clear narrative in my pocket, and I filled up the blanks when this American gentleman called. I understand that up to this week you were unaware of his existence."

"That is so. He called last Tuesday."

"Did he tell you of our interview to-day?"

"Yes, he came straight back to me. He had been very angry."

"Why should he be angry?"

"He seemed to think it was some reflection on his honour. But he was quite cheerful again when he returned."

"Did he suggest any course of action?"

"No, sir, he did not."

"Has he had, or asked for, any money from you?"

"No, sir, never!"

"You see no possible object he has in view?"

"None, except what he states."

"Did you tell him of our telephone appointment?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

Holmes was lost in thought. I could see that he was puzzled.

"Have you any articles of great value in your collection?"

"No, sir. I am not a rich man. It is a good collection, but not a very valuable one."

"You have no fear of burglars?"

"Not the least."

"How long have you been in these rooms?"

"Nearly five years."

Holmes's cross-examination was interrupted by an imperative knocking at the door. No sooner had our client unlatched it than the American lawyer burst excitedly into the room.

"Here you are!" he cried, waving a paper over his head. "I thought I should be in time to get you. Mr. Nathan Garrideb, my congratulations! You are a rich man, sir. Our business is happily finished and all is well. As to you, Mr. Holmes, we can only say we are sorry if we have given you any useless trouble."

He handed over the paper to our client, who stood staring at a marked advertisement. Holmes and I leaned forward and read it over his shoulder. This is how it ran:—

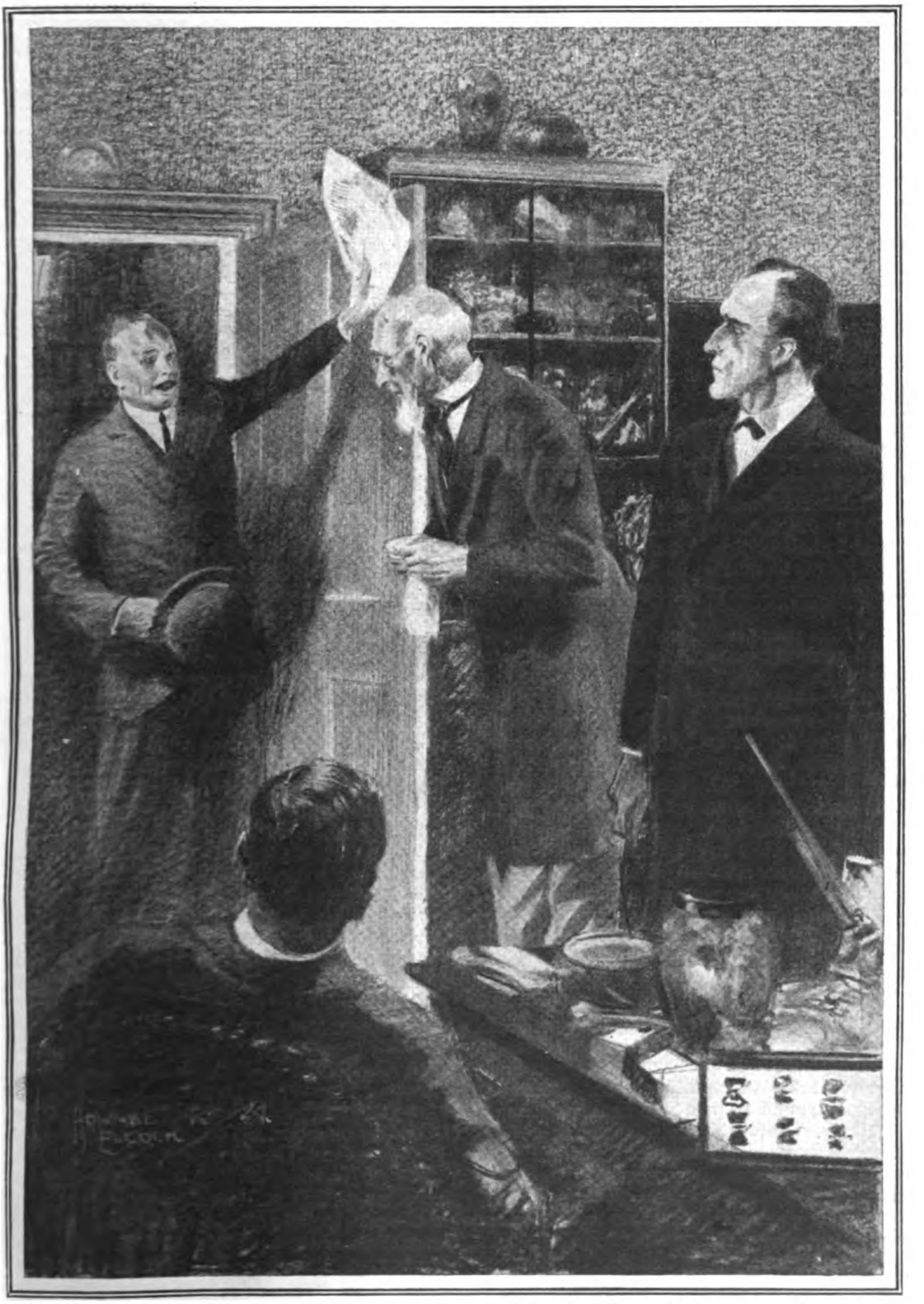
> HOWARD GARRIDEB.
>
> Constructor of Agricultural Machinery.
>
> Binders, reapers' steam and hand plows, drills, harrows, farmers' carts, buckboards, and all other appliances.
>
> Estimates for Artesian Wells.
>
> Apply Grosvenor Buildings, Aston.

"Glorious!" gasped our host. "That makes our third man."

"I had opened up inquiries in Birmingham," said the American, "and my agent there has sent me this advertisement from a local paper. We must hustle and put the thing through. I have written to this man and told him that you will see him in his office to-morrow afternoon at four o'clock."

"You want *me* to see him?"

"What do you say, Mr. Holmes? Don't you think it would be wiser? Here am I,



"Here you are!" he cried, waving a paper over his head. "Mr. Nathan Garrideb, my congratulations! You are a rich man, sir."

a wandering American with a wonderful tale. Why should he believe what I tell him? But you are a Britisher with solid references, and he is bound to take notice of what you say. I would go with you if you wished, but I have a very busy day to-morrow, and I could always follow you if you are in any trouble."

"Well, I have not made such a journey for years."

"It is nothing, Mr. Garrideb. I have figured out your connections. You leave at twelve and should be there soon after two. Then you can be back the same night. All you have to do is to see this man, explain the matter, and get an affidavit of his existence. By the Lord!" he added, hotly, "considering I've come all the way from the centre of America, it is surely little enough if you go a hundred miles in order to put this matter through."

"Quite so," said Holmes. "I think what this gentleman says is very true."

Mr. Nathan Garrideb shrugged his shoulders with a disconsolate air. "Well, if you insist I shall go," said he. "It is certainly hard for me to refuse you anything, considering the glory of hope that you have brought into my life."

"Then that is agreed," said Holmes, "and no doubt you will let me have a report as soon as you can."

"I'll see to that," said the American. "Well," he added, looking at his watch, "I'll have to get on. I'll call to-morrow, Mr. Nathan, and see you off to Birmingham. Coming my way, Mr. Holmes? Well, then, good-bye, and we may have good news for you to-morrow night."

I noticed that my friend's face cleared when the American left the room, and the look of thoughtful perplexity had vanished.

"I wish I could look over your collection, Mr. Garrideb," said he. "In my profession all sorts of odd knowledge comes useful, and this room of yours is a storehouse of it."

Our client shone with pleasure and his eyes gleamed from behind his big glasses.

"I had always heard, sir, that you were a very intelligent man," said he. "I could take you round now, if you have the time."

"Unfortunately, I have not. But these specimens are so well labelled and classified that they hardly need your personal explanation. If I should be able to look in to-morrow, I presume that there would be no objection to my glancing over them?"

"None at all. You are most welcome. The place will, of course, be shut up, but Mrs. Saunders is in the basement up to four o'clock and would let you in with her key."

"Well, I happen to be clear to-morrow afternoon. If you would say a word to Mrs. Saunders it would be quite in order. By the way, who is your house-agent?"

Our client was amazed at the sudden question.

"Holloway and Steele, in the Edgware Road. But why?"

"I am a bit of an archæologist myself when it comes to houses," said Holmes, laughing. "I was wondering if this was Queen Anne or Georgian."

"Georgian, beyond doubt."

"Really. I should have thought a little earlier. However, it is easily ascertained. Well, good-bye, Mr. Garrideb, and may you have every success in your Birmingham journey."

The house-agent's was close by, but we found that it was closed for the day, so we made our way back to Baker Street. It was not till after dinner that Holmes reverted to the subject.

"Our little problem draws to a close," said he. "No doubt you have outlined the solution in your own mind."

"I can make neither head nor tail of it."

"The head is surely clear enough and the tail we should see to-morrow. Did you notice nothing curious about that advertisement?"

"I saw that the word 'plough' was misspelt."

"Oh, you did notice that, did you? Come, Watson, you improve all the time. Yes, it was bad English but good American. The printer had set it up as received. Then the buckboards. That is American also. And artesian wells are commoner with them than with us. It was a typical American advertisement, but purporting to be from an English firm. What do you make of that?"

"I can only suppose that this American lawyer put it in himself. What his object was I fail to understand."

"Well, there are alternative explanations. Anyhow, he wanted to get this good old fossil up to Birmingham. That is very clear. I might have told him that he was clearly going on a wild-goose chase, but, on second thoughts, it seemed better to clear the stage by letting him go. To-morrow, Watson—well, to-morrow will speak for itself."

HOLMES was up and out early. When he returned at lunch-time I noticed that his face was very grave.

"This is a more serious matter than I had expected, Watson," said he. "It is fair to tell you so, though I know it will only be an additional reason to you for running your head into danger. I should know my Watson by now. But there *is* danger, and you should know it."

"Well, it is not the first we have shared, Holmes. I hope it may not be the last. What is the particular danger this time?"

"We are up against a very hard case. I have identified Mr. John Garrideb, Counsellor at Law. He is none other than 'Killer' Evans, of sinister and murderous reputation."

"I fear I am none the wiser."

"Ah, it is not part of your profession to carry about a portable Newgate Calendar in your memory. I have been down to see friend Lestrade at the Yard. There may be an occasional want of imaginative intuition down there, but they lead the world for thoroughness and method. I had an idea that we might get on the track of our American friend in their records. Sure enough, I found his chubby face smiling up at me from the Rogues' Portrait Gallery. James Winter, *alias* Morecroft, *alias* Killer Evans, was the inscription below." Holmes drew an envelope from his pocket. "I scribbled down a few points from his *dossier*. Aged forty-four. Native of Chicago. Known to have shot three men in the States. Escaped from penitentiary through political influence. Came to London in 1893. Shot a man over cards in a night club in the Waterloo Road in January, 1895. Man died, but he was shown to have been the aggressor in the row. Dead man was identified as Rodger Presbury, famous as forger and coiner in Chicago. Killer Evans released in 1901. Has been under police supervision since, but so far as known has led an honest life. Very dangerous man, usually carries arms and is prepared to use them. That is our bird, Watson—a sporting bird, as you must admit."

"But what is his game?"

"Well, it begins to define itself. I have been to the house-agents. Our client, as he told us, has been there five years. It was unlet for a year before then. The previous tenant was a gentleman at large named Waldron. Waldron's appearance was well remembered at the office. He had suddenly vanished and nothing more been heard of him. He was a tall, bearded man with very dark features. Now, Presbury, the man whom Killer Evans had shot, was, according to Scotland Yard, a tall, dark man with a beard. As a working hypothesis, I think we may take it that Presbury, the American criminal, used to live in the very room which our innocent friend now devotes to his museum. So at last we get a link, you see."

"And the next link?"

"Well, we must go now and look for that."

He took a revolver from the drawer and handed it to me.

"I have my old favourite with me. If our Wild West friend tries to live up to his nickname, we must be ready for him. I'll give you an hour for a siesta, Watson, and then I think it will be time for our Ryder Street adventure."

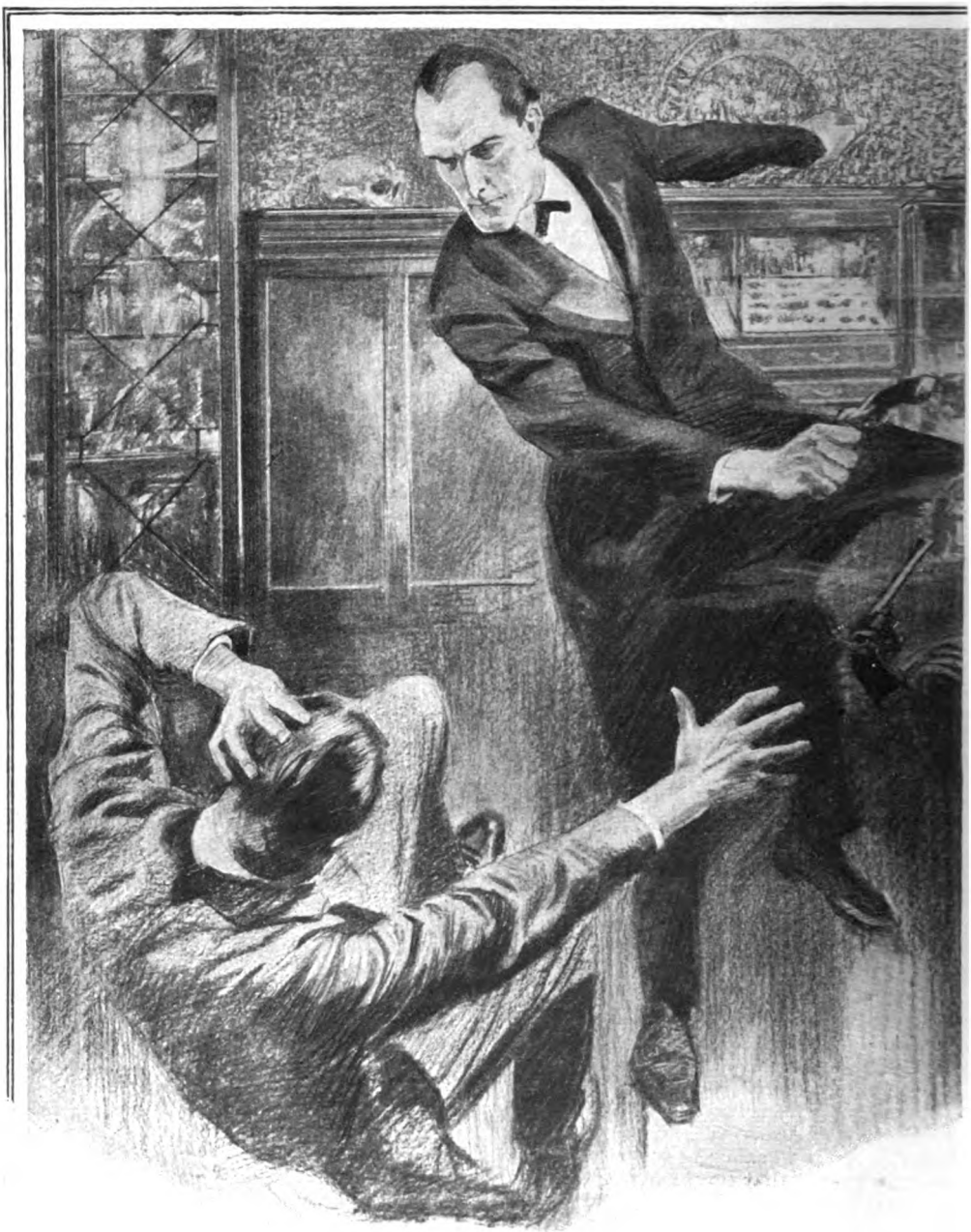
IT was just four o'clock when we reached the curious apartment of Nathan Garrideb. Mrs. Saunders, the caretaker, was about to leave, but she had no hesitation in admitting us, for the door shut with a spring lock and Holmes promised to see that all was safe before we left. Shortly afterwards the outer door closed, her bonnet passed the bow window, and we knew that we were alone in the lower floor of the house. Holmes made a rapid examination of the premises. There was one cupboard in a dark corner which stood out a little from the wall. It was behind this that we eventually crouched, while Holmes in a whisper outlined his intentions.

"He wanted to get our amiable friend out of his room—that is very clear, and, as the collector never went out, it took some planning to do it. The whole of this Garrideb invention was apparently for no other end. I must say, Watson, that there is a certain devilish ingenuity about it, even if the queer name of the tenant did give him an opening which he could hardly have expected. He wove his plot with remarkable cunning."

"But what did he want?"

"Well, that is what we are here to find out. It has nothing whatever to do with our client, so far as I can read the situation. It is something connected with the man he murdered—the man who may have been his confederate in crime. There is some guilty secret in the room. That is how I read it. At first I thought our friend might have something in his collection more valuable than he knew—something worth the attention of a big criminal. But the fact that Rodger Presbury of evil memory inhabited these rooms points to some deeper reason. Well, Watson, we can but possess our souls in patience and see what the hour may bring."

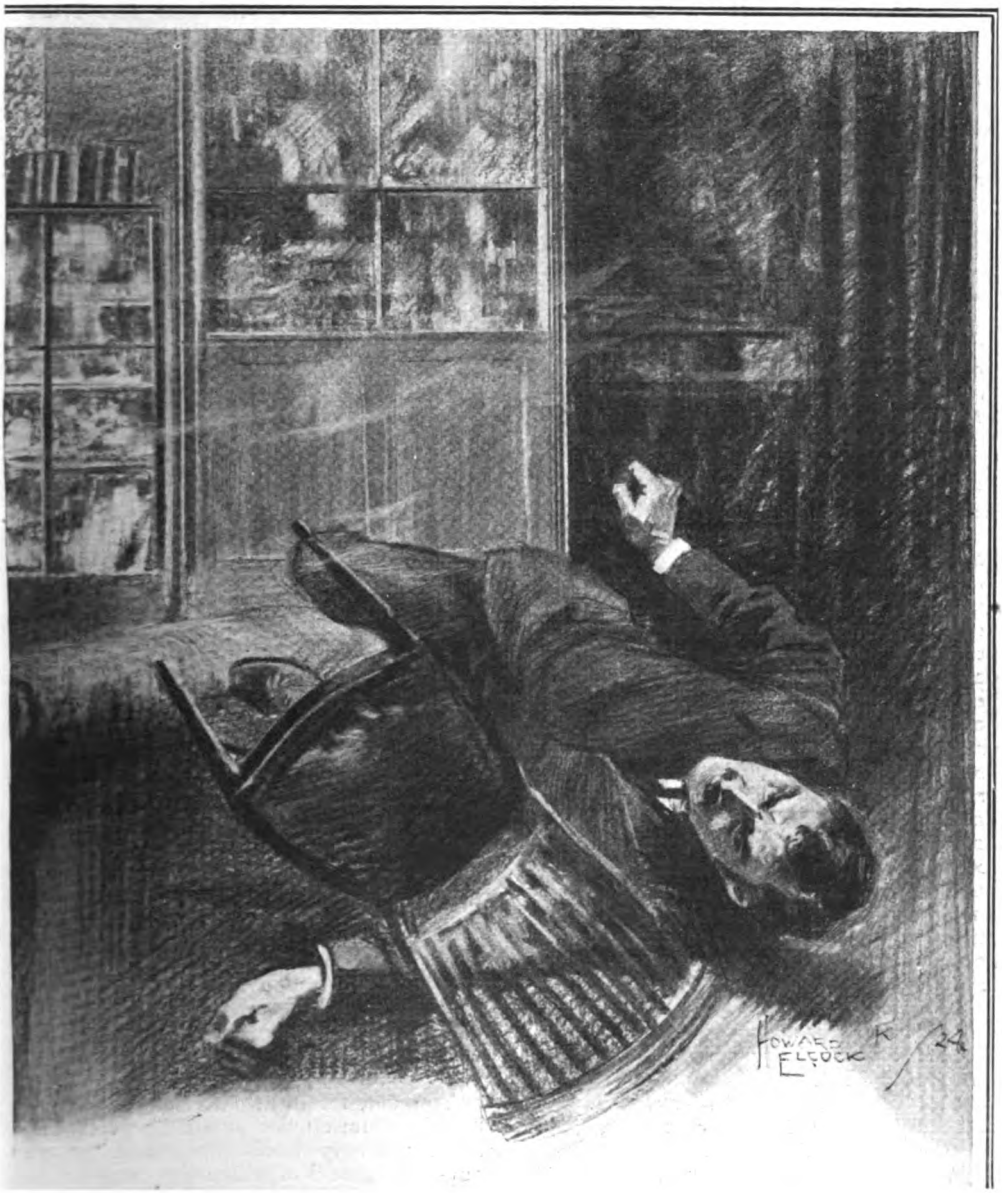
That hour was not long in striking. We crouched closer in the shadow as we heard the outer door open and shut. Then came the sharp, metallic snap of a key, and the American was in the room. He closed the door softly behind him, took a sharp glance around him to see that all was safe, threw off his overcoat, and walked up to the central table with the brisk manner of one who knows exactly what he has to do and how to do it. He pushed the table to one side, tore up the square of carpet on which it rested, rolled it completely back, and then, drawing a jemmy from his inside pocket, he knelt down and worked vigorously upon the floor. Presently we heard the sound of sliding boards, and an instant later a



There was a crash as Holmes's

square had opened in the planks. Killer Evans struck a match, lit a stump of candle, and vanished from our view.

Clearly our moment had come. Holmes touched my wrist as a signal, and together we stole across to the open trapdoor. Gently as we moved, however, the old floor must have creaked under our feet, for the head of our American, peering anxiously round, emerged suddenly from the open space. His face turned upon us with a glare of baffled rage, which gradually



pistol came down on the man's head.

softened into a rather shamefaced grin as he realized that two pistols were pointed at his head.

"Well, well!" said he, coolly, as he scrambled to the surface. "I guess you have been one too many for me, Mr. Holmes. Saw through my game, I suppose, and played me for a sucker from the first. Well, sir, I hand it to you; you have me beat and——"

In an instant he had whisked out a revolver from his breast and had fired two shots. I felt a sudden hot sear as if a red-

hot iron had been pressed to my thigh. There was a crash as Holmes's pistol came down on the man's head. I had a vision of him sprawling upon the floor with blood running down his face while Holmes rummaged him for weapons. Then my friend's wiry arms were round me and he was leading me to a chair.

"You're not hurt, Watson? For God's sake, say that you are not hurt!"

It was worth a wound—it was worth many wounds—to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear, hard eyes were dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking. For the one and only time I caught a glimpse of a great heart as well as of a great brain. All my years of humble but single-minded service culminated in that moment of revelation.

"It's nothing, Holmes. It's a mere scratch."

He had ripped up my trousers with his pocket-knife.

"You are right," he cried, with an immense sigh of relief. "It is quite superficial." His face set like flint as he glared at our prisoner, who was sitting up with a dazed face. "By the Lord, it is as well for you. If you had killed Watson, you would not have got out of this room alive. Now, sir, what have you to say for yourself?"

He had nothing to say for himself. He only lay and scowled. I leaned on Holmes's arm, and together we looked down into the small cellar which had been disclosed by the secret flap. It was still illuminated by the candle which Evans had taken down with him. Our eyes fell upon a mass of rusted machinery, great rolls of paper, a litter of bottles, and, neatly arranged upon a small table, a number of neat little bundles.

"A printing press—a counterfeiter's outfit," said Holmes.

"Yes, sir," said our prisoner, staggering slowly to his feet and then sinking into the chair. "The greatest counterfeiter London ever saw. That's Presbury's machine, and those bundles on the table are two thousand of Presbury's notes worth a hundred each and fit to pass anywhere. Help yourselves, gentlemen. Call it a deal and let me beat it."

Holmes laughed.

"We don't do things like that, Mr. Evans. There is no bolt-hole for you in this country. You shot this man, Presbury, did you not?"

"Yes, sir, and got five years for it, though it was he who pulled on me. Five years—when I should have had a medal the size of a soup plate. No living man could tell a Presbury from a Bank of England, and if I hadn't put him out he would have flooded London with them. I was the only one in the world who knew where he made them. Can you wonder that I wanted to get to the place? And can you wonder that when I found this crazy boob of a bug-hunter with the queer name squatting right on the top of it, and never quitting his room, I had to do the best I could to shift him? Maybe I would have been wiser if I had put him away. It would have been easy enough, but I'm a soft-hearted guy that can't begin shooting unless the other man has a gun also. But say, Mr. Holmes, what have I done wrong, anyhow? I've not used this plant. I've not hurt this old stiff. Where do you get me?"

"Only attempted murder, so far as I can see," said Holmes. "But that's not our job. They take that at the next stage. What we wanted at present was just your sweet self. Please give the Yard a call, Watson. It won't be entirely unexpected."

SO those were the facts about Killer Evans and his remarkable invention of the three Garridebs. We heard later that our poor old friend never got over the shock of his dissipated dreams. When his castle in the air fell down, it buried him beneath the ruins. He was last heard of at a nursing-home in Brixton. It was a glad day at the Yard when the Presbury outfit was discovered, for, though they knew that it existed, they had never been able, after the death of the man, to find out where it was. Evans had indeed done great service, and caused several worthy C.I.D. men to sleep the sounder, for the counterfeiter stands in a class by himself as a public danger. They would willingly have subscribed to that soup-plate medal of which the criminal had spoken, but an unappreciative Bench took a less favourable view, and the Killer returned to those shades from which he had just emerged.

NEXT MONTH:

Another Sherlock Holmes Story:

"THE ADVENTURE OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS CLIENT."

A WIFE, A HOUSE, AND A THOUSAND A YEAR!

BY

ALBERT KINROSS

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

I.

BEAUTY in distress is always a pathetic spectacle, and rarely can any maiden have been more beautiful or more pathetic than Sylvia Harlow, who had just been fired from the Nelson Underwear Company, of 191, Fore Street, London, E.C.2. It was not her fault. Ever since she left the Cosmopolitan Business College in Chancery Lane she had acted as typist-stenographer to Mr. Wordie, who usually described her as his secretary. And now, at the ripe age of twenty, after three years of strenuous service, she had been flung out upon the cold, cold world. So had Mr. Wordie, with a wife and five children. Truth to tell, he had been more interested in golf than in the business, and so the directors had decided to make a change; indeed, they had concluded that Mr. Wordie with a half-year's salary in his pocket and out of the business was far more profitable than Mr. Wordie at his desk and working out his time. Sylvia Harlow was given but four weeks' wages, and as the new man who took Mr. Wordie's place had his own stenographer, a useful creature in blue serge, poor Sylvia, at the time we meet her, was out of a job and looking hard. Mr. Wordie had promised to do what he could for her, and when he found something himself no other secretary but Sylvia would serve, and he also gave her a testimonial in writing which declared her a model and a pattern of what a stenographer should be. But so far nobody had offered her a job, and twice she had been told by severe and bearded citizens that she was "too good-looking and too well-dressed."

In any rational and civilized society Sylvia would not have had to look for jobs. So beautiful and charming a girl would have had the choice of umpteen husbands. But in Europe, after the war, with all the good men gone and the old men married, there remained very little but the bloated sons of profiteers, the poverty-stricken ex-soldier trying hard to catch up with five lost years, or those decayed lounge-lizards, highbrow geniuses, and dancing-floor heroes who had taken shelter from the storm. And Sylvia wanted none of these; in short, she didn't know what she did want, except that she must find another job. And that promptly.

Her money was giving out and her shoes were wearing out when she called at the offices of Messrs. Whiteman, French, and Company, wholesale tobacco merchants and manufacturers, of Peacock's Lane, Walworth, S.E.17, and asked to see Mr. Lewis Whiteman.

It had come about in this way. She had already applied for seventeen jobs without any luck and had been turned down at the eighteenth. The man, however, had looked her over, and, calling her back, "I thay, mith," he had shouted, with a horrible lisp, "I think if you go to Whiteman, French, and Co., the tobacco people in Walworth, and ask for Mr. Lewith Whiteman, he may be able to give you a job. Give him my card, and if you wait a moment I'll write it down."

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This man was as good as his word. He produced a card and wrote out the name and address of these unknown tobacco merchants; and now Sylvia Harlow had found the factory and warehouse and got as far as asking for "Mr. Lewith Whiteman."

A small boy had taken the card and gone through a door with it.

"This way, miss," he said, when he returned; and Sylvia followed him, first through a passage and then into an office with a fine scarlet and blue Turkey carpet, a bowl of roses, an agreeable odour of tobacco, and two young gentlemen who seemed to be simply bursting with intelligence, energy, and the proper spirit. These two, Sylvia divined, unlike Mr. Wordie, would never be overcome by golf, tennis, or any other mania not strictly connected with the passionate pursuit of affairs.

They examined her critically and offered her a chair, also a cigarette and a lighted match; and before she had time to discover whether she ought to sit there smoking or not, "What do you think of it?" they both asked; "it's a good cigarette, the best on the market?"

Sylvia blew two jets of smoke down her delicate nostrils.

"It *is* a good cigarette," she agreed; "but I've smoked better."

"We mean at the price," cried Mr. Lewis Whiteman. "*We've* smoked better. But at five shillings the hundred—can you beat it?"

"Four-and-eleven the hundred," corrected the other young gentleman, whom Sylvia was later on to know as Mr. Maurice French.

"Yes, we'll make it four-and-eleven. The smoker saves a penny and thinks he saves a shilling. Maurice, you're a wonder!" exclaimed Mr. Whiteman.

"The oldest stunt in the world," protested Maurice; "it was practised by the ancient Egyptians and in Babylon; it was known to Noah before the Flood."

Mr. French leant back, very pleased with himself; and next Mr. Whiteman came to business.

"Yes, there is a job we might offer you," he began, "but it's quite different from the last one." He broke off suddenly. "You aren't married, are you?" he asked. "One never knows."

"No, I'm not married," Sylvia answered, calmly; "and I don't see what that's got to do with it," she added, with misgivings.

"Or engaged to be married?" pursued Mr. Whiteman, unabashed.

"No," replied Sylvia; and next it occurred to her that they might want a young woman who'd stay instead of flitting, a girl who would consider her job a permanency and hold it, undistracted by the counterclaims of matrimony, courtship, and other human weaknesses. She remembered Wordie and how golf had uprooted him.

"No, I'm neither married nor engaged to be married," she repeated, brightly; "nor likely to be, as all the good men were killed off in the war—er—present company excepted."

Both gentlemen smiled.

"I call that smart," said one; and, "It's good enough to put in a society play," observed the other, showing a flashing range of milk-white teeth.

Sylvia was thinking of Jimmie Baines and how she had been forced to turn him down. But that couldn't be helped, could it?

Once more Mr. Whiteman grew serious.

"Perhaps you have some testimonial from your last employer?" he inquired.

Sylvia produced Mr. Wordie's letter.

Both gentlemen studied this, and "Excellent!" cried Mr. Whiteman; and "First-class!" added Mr. Maurice French.

Mr. Whiteman rose from his chair and stood upon the blue and red Turkey carpet, his hands behind his back and looking straight at Sylvia Harlow.

"You won't think us impertinent," he resumed, "and maybe it's unusual, but before we go any farther we should like to know exactly who you are. Of course, if you feel that way, you can tell us to mind our own business; but that won't help you if you are really looking for this job."

Sylvia had nothing to hide.

"I quite understand," she answered. "Father was a country parson, and he died, leaving mother and me, and we were both very poor. So Aunt Maria took mother to live with her and Uncle Bill sent me to the Cosmopolitan Business College, and that's all there is to it. Uncle Bill's a sailor and Aunt Maria has a little property and raises chickens."

The two partners looked at one another, and then Mr. Whiteman said, "If you will give us a day or two to make inquiries and leave your own address and your mother's address and that letter from your last employer, we will let you know as promptly as possible."

"Know what?" asked Sylvia.

"About that job. It's a very special job; but until we are certain, it's best to say nothing about it."

Mystified and full of curiosity, Sylvia wrote down the two addresses and left Mr. Wordie's letter.

"Thank you," said Mr. Whiteman.

Mr. Maurice French opened the door. "You can find your way?" he asked.

"Of course," answered Sylvia.

When she was gone and the two partners

sat alone together, "Well, what do you think of her?" asked Mr. Lewis Whiteman.

"She'll do," returned Mr. Maurice French. "If she don't turn nasty—you can never tell—she'll do."

II.

SYLVIA had been reduced to living on oatmeal, tea, and bananas, which is a pretty good diet if you happen to be an ascetic or a hermit; but as Sylvia was neither she was greatly relieved on the Monday morning when a letter came from Mr. Lewis Whiteman asking her to lunch with him and Mrs. Whiteman at the Trocadero Restaurant at one-thirty sharp on that same day. She was to telephone an answer to the office.

Of course, she accepted, and then she re-read a second letter that had come by the same post. It said:—

"*My Darling Child,—*

"*I feel bound to tell you* AT ONCE *that two strange gentlemen called here in a motor-car this afternoon. They asked for me and your Aunt Maria, who was up the lane looking after the chickens, so I saw them alone. They said that you had applied for a position with their firm, but as this position could only be filled by a person of the* UTMOST RESPECTABILITY, *they felt bound to make inquiries before engaging you or anybody else. I trust that I satisfied them upon this point, and I think that my own personal appearance and manner would be enough to convince anybody that* THOUGH WE ARE POOR *we are* GENTLEWOMEN *and have* ALWAYS *behaved as such. I mentioned your poor dear father and your Uncle William; I was wearing my black silk with the beads and a widow's cap, and I am sure I made* A VERY GOOD IMPRESSION. *I told them that you had always been a good daughter and that you were a steady, conscientious child, and perhaps I committed an indiscretion when I also said that you had refused young Mr. Baines, who held a very respectable position in an insurance company, as you were averse to long engagements, and his present salary, rising at the rate of ten pounds* PER ANNUM, *would only be able to keep a wife when love's young dream had grown 'a trifle moth-eaten.' Those were your very words, and both gentlemen laughed when I repeated them. They both stayed for a cup of tea;* I WOULD NOT LET THEM LEAVE WITHOUT ONE; *and when your Aunt Maria came in, with her muddy boots and short skirt and a basket of eggs, they bought the eggs at London prices and paid for them, and took them away in their car.*

"*They didn't at all mind Aunt Maria being so muddy, and we had tea in the sitting-room instead of in the kitchen as usual, which is another of your Aunt Maria's unconventional ways. Visitors always make a change, and it is rather dull here, even on a nice spring day like to-day.*

"*I am writing* AT ONCE *to tell you this, and I do hope you get the place, as unfortunately neither I nor your aunt are very well off, as you know. Now I must conclude in haste, and am,*

"*Affectionately,*
"MOTHER.

"*P.S.—Your aunt sends her best regards and advises you to be careful.*"

"Before we go any farther," said Mr. Whiteman, "we should like to know exactly who you are."

"Dear old mother," said Sylvia, replacing the letter in its envelope, "if she knew how hard up I am, she'd have the creeps! And she needn't have told them about me and Jimmie; it isn't their business, and, besides, it's all over," and Sylvia heaved a sigh.

She looked out of her window and wondered what had become of Jimmie Baines. He had chucked his job with the insurance company and gone off to America; and that was all she knew or had heard about poor Jimmie. Well, that couldn't be helped. Perhaps he'd marry a girl over there with pots of money.

She changed into a wine-red dress that went well with her chestnut hair and clear blue eyes. Her shoes and stockings were grey, and she wore her grey fox that had originally been rabbit, a grey hat, and her last clean pair of gloves. In her purse she had one pound fourteen and six, her entire capital, and she prayed a prayer that Mr. Whiteman would engage her there and then, so that she could draw her wages on the Saturday.

MR. AND MRS. WHITEMAN were barely a minute late, for which they apologized, and that served to break the ice. Sylvia liked Mrs. Whiteman, who was a pleasant, good-natured-looking girl, a year or so older than herself. She might grow stout later on, but at present she had her figure.

"Lewis has told me all about you," she exclaimed; "I do admire your pluck."

"Most girls have to work nowadays," said Sylvia. "You're one of the lucky ones."

"She is," chuckled Mr. Whiteman, and squeezed his Dora's arm. He had introduced her as "My wife, Dora"; and Dora she was throughout that copious and carefully selected lunch.

Sylvia ate. My word, how she ate! It was the first square meal she had taken since Saturday. When it was ended and Mr. Whiteman had settled the bill, "Miss Harlow and I'll go back to the office, if you'll excuse us, dear," he said, grown suddenly serious.

He called a taxi and told the man to drive to Walworth, and Sylvia sat beside him, wondering. At luncheon he had said nothing about the future. Only once during their drive did Mr. Whiteman break the silence; the rest of the time he seemed absorbed in his own profound and passionate meditations. But, "How did you like my wife?" he rapped out as they were crossing Westminster Bridge.

"Very much," replied Sylvia. "She isn't a bit stuck up. In my last place——"

"Do you think you would get on with her?" Mr. Whiteman wasn't interested in what had happened elsewhere.

"I think so. But am I going to work for *her?*"

"You're going to work for all of us," said Mr. Whiteman.

The rest of that drive was silence till they came to the factory in Walworth. Sylvia could not but feel that something was brewing, that something vital and decisive was in the air.

They entered the private office and Mr. Maurice French was waiting. He greeted them briefly, and Sylvia could see at a glance that he, like his partner, was all afire with pent-up stress and deep emotion.

She looked from one face to the other and held her breath. She noted the nervous and highly-strung tension of the one, the iron and dogged resolution of the other.

"You will be of age on the fourteenth of August next—that is to say, in three months' time," began Mr. Lewis Whiteman.

"How did you know?" asked Sylvia.

"We went to Somerset House and looked it up."

"And you looked mother up as well, and Aunt Maria——"

"Business is business," responded Mr. Lewis Whiteman.

"We know who you are," added Mr. Maurice French; "now Mr. Whiteman is going to tell you about ourselves."

"Then aren't you tobacco merchants?" cried Sylvia.

"We are, and that is just the point." Mr. Whiteman was speaking. He rose from his desk, crossed the red and blue Turkey carpet, and came back with a bundle of papers. "Now don't interrupt," he commanded, "till we have placed the whole scheme before you. Is that agreed?"

"I won't"; and Sylvia made ready to listen.

"We are placing three brand-new lines on the market. There is the Daydream Cigarette—you've already smoked one; there is Daydream Mixture, a pipe tobacco; and there is the Daydream Pipe—it will be the best briar at the price put out by any maker. One half of our capital has been sunk in these. Most of the other half will be spent in advertising them. If they don't go we will be ruined men; if they do go we will be made men. You note the difference?"

Sylvia nodded.

"And you can earn a fortune for yourself. We need your assistance. Let me explain," pursued Mr. Whiteman. "We propose to advertise these in half-guinea parcels. Each parcel will contain one hundred Daydream Cigarettes, of which the usual retail price will be four shillings and elevenpence; two ounces of Daydream Mixture, of

which the usual retail price will be elevenpence-halfpenny the ounce; and one Day-dream Pipe, of which the usual retail price will be three shillings and elevenpence. The parcel is thus worth ten shillings and ninepence, but the customer will get it for half a guinea—that is to say, at ten shillings and sixpence; and, moreover, with each parcel he will receive a coupon which will entitle him to one chance in our draw for a

"Lewis has told me all about you," exclaimed Mrs. Whiteman; "*I* do admire your pluck."

stupendous prize. Nothing so attractive or so generous has ever been offered before; in the whole history of advertising there is nothing like it"; and here Mr. Lewis Whiteman unfolded one of the papers which he had placed upon his desk. "This is only a tentative design," he said. "Now look at it!"

Sylvia looked.

At the head of the sheet in block capitals she read:—

"A WIFE, A HOUSE, AND A THOUSAND A YEAR."

And below this was a photograph of a young and tender damsel with bare shoulders and a plump and beautifully rounded arm; while beside her stood a representation of a creeper-clad cottage of a size ample enough to shelter love's first and wildest raptures; and to complete the picture and make sure of both was a reproduction of a cheque for twenty thousand pounds, signed Whiteman, French, and Company.

"Now, what do you think of that?" cried Mr. Whiteman.

"It makes me dizzy," was all Sylvia could think of at the moment.

"That's the right effect," said Mr. Maurice French. "It's got to make people dizzy and buy coupons."

"We're putting our shirts on this scheme," continued Mr. Whiteman. "The reading matter below explains it. The Bishop of Putney has consented to perform the marriage ceremony; you can have any house you like anywhere you like, with one acre of well-laid-out garden, a garage, and up to seven rooms and a kitchen if it's in the

country, and up to two thousand pounds in value if it's in a town. The money—that is to say, the twenty thousand pounds—will be invested in Five per Cent. War Loan or any Trustee Stock you like to name, and house and income will be settled on the bride. If an American or a Canadian wins it we repeat the offer in dollars and cents, if a Frenchman in francs, if an Italian in their currency——"

"And if it's a yellow or a black man?" interrupted Sylvia.

"Then the next white man gets it. We've foreseen everything," concluded Mr. Whiteman, unfolding a second and more closely written sheet. "Read this advertisement through carefully and you will see that it provides against any difficulty that may or may not arise. All they've got to do is to send in half a guinea, payable in British funds; in exchange they will receive by return mail one box containing a hundred Daydream Cigarettes, one tin containing two ounces of Daydream Mixture, and one Daydream Pipe in a cardboard container. These alone are worth considerably more than the price charged, and we pay the postal rates to any corner of the globe. Our idea is to introduce three excellent articles to the attention of the public. And each packet in addition will contain a coupon——"

"Yes, I can read all that," said Sylvia, folding up the sheet; "but who is going to be the wife?"

Both partners exchanged glances and Mr. Maurice French shook with suppressed emotion, to hide which he blew his large and shapely nose.

"Who is going to be the wife?" repeated Sylvia.

"*You are!*" cried Mr. Lewis Whiteman. "We count on you. Will you do it? Take a day to think it over and say 'Yes'!"

Startled, Sylvia looked about her. Was she awake, or was she dreaming?

"You're just the right kind of girl, young, beautiful, educated. Any man would be proud to marry you. Our whole scheme depends upon it." Mr. French was almost on his knees.

"You'll have the house and the dowry; it'll all be settled on you. And till the whole thing's fixed up we'll pay you a good salary and you'll live with Mrs. Whiteman. You'll have your photograph in all the papers; you'll be a celebrity. But we'll count on you to play the game. That's why we were so particular as to whom we chose. We're putting every farthing we've got into this, and our wives' money as well. We believe in it; it's the greatest scheme that ever was. Will you join us?"

"Give me till to-morrow?" said Sylvia. "By noon to-morrow I'll come here and say 'Yes' or 'No.' That's fair?"

Both partners agreed that it was fair; and Mr. Whiteman escorted Sylvia down the passage into the outer office, and as far as the door by which she had first entered.

"Do you think she'll come in?" asked Mr. French on his return, and waited anxiously for Mr. Whiteman's answer.

"She's a fool if she doesn't," observed that oracle, "and I've no use for fools. But if she does, she'll play the game. That girl's a sport."

III.

SYLVIA, meanwhile, was riding home on top of a bus and turning herself into a debating society at one and the same moment. Should she or should she not? It was the chance of a lifetime. Most girls in her sorry plight would jump at it. But there was her mother to consider, and Aunt Maria, and even Uncle Bill. In any case, she wouldn't let their name get into the newspapers. If she did it at all, she would do it anonymously; they could print her picture, but not her name. That would make it only the more interesting and mysterious. "The anonymous bride"—she saw it written out in large letters beside her portrait; and she would have to live with the Whitemans. Well, that mightn't be so bad. And, last of all, she thought of the unknown creature who would claim her. Marriage was a lottery, people said, so perhaps she mightn't be worse off than most wives and most husbands. Next she thought of the Bishop of Putney, who would perform the marriage ceremony. She recalled him as a warm advocate of early marriages and large families. He was always writing letters to the papers and preaching about these two subjects, though, as many people had remarked, he himself had taken jolly good care to do without either. Still, a bishop was a bishop, and if he approved, surely her mother and Aunt Maria would approve as well. And, lastly and finally, she had to make her own life, hadn't she? And the money and house would be hers, and if that husband made a nuisance of himself she could turn him out and spend the money herself. She began to figure what she would do with it. Her mother would get a hundred a year to begin with. Perhaps she might have to live in America or France or in some other foreign place.

She had reached her home by now, a poky little room facing Primrose Hill. Never had it seemed more poky than on this afternoon. But for the sake of her mother and Aunt Maria she had put up with it and a great deal more besides. She wouldn't be a drag on these old ladies.

Poor old things! But before she made up her mind finally and irrevocably, she would go to bed and sleep on it; one always saw things plainly in the morning.

IV.

SHORTLY before twelve o'clock next morning Sylvia renewed her acquaintance with the palpitating partners. Mr. Whiteman held out a shaking hand, Mr. French placed a chair for her, and "Well?" cried both simultaneously.

"I've thought it over," Sylvia began, "and I've decided——"

"What?" they almost shrieked.

"What I'm going to do."

"And?" they fairly yelled.

"I was about to tell you."

Both partners bit their lips in the heroic endeavour to let Sylvia finish without further interruption.

"I've decided——"

You could have heard a pin drop on that red and blue Turkey carpet.

"To go in with you," Sylvia finished. "I may be lucky; I'll chance it."

Both partners heaved a sigh of relief that might have been heard out in the Walworth Road.

"I said she was a sport!" cried Mr. Whiteman.

"That's a fact!" exclaimed Mr. Maurice French.

Mr. Whiteman had seized the telephone on his desk, and Mr. French did the same with the one on *his* desk. And presently they were both in animated conversation with their respective wives.

"Dora says you're wonderful," cried Mr. Whiteman.

"Mrs. French is dying to meet you," added the other partner.

"Now let's talk business," said Sylvia.

Nothing could have pleased either gentleman better.

"To begin with, I don't want my name and father's name and mother's name mixed up in this. I don't want to be known all my life as the lady who was won in a raffle. That won't hurt; indeed, the more mysterious you make it, the more talk there will be, and consequently the more advertisement."

"That's sound"; and Mr. Whiteman nodded.

"No name, but lots of mystery," said Mr. Maurice French. "Capital!"

"I understand your wanting me to live with Mrs. Whiteman at your home, so that there can be no question as to my social position and respectability," Sylvia pursued.

"That's the idea," agreed Mr. Whiteman.

"I'll want the right kind of clothes and enough pocket money——"

"Say five pounds a week for the lot?"

"That's generous. And if I want to run down for a week-end and see mother——"

"You can have the car. Mrs. Whiteman and I will treat you exactly like—like one of the family. And when you're tired of us you can go and spend a week with Mrs. French—isn't that so, Maurice?"

"We'll be delighted," exclaimed Mr. French; "and my wife's always on the go: theatres, dances, bridge, anything you like. Heaps of friends—simply heaps!"

"There's nothing in law that could make this a binding contract, and, in any case, you're not of age yet. So there'll be no agreement. But we're all pretty honest here, aren't we?" Mr. Whiteman continued. "And here's your last week's allowance and this week's," he ended, producing two five-pound notes, which he gallantly placed in an envelope and handed across to Sylvia Harlow.

She accepted the money and placed it in her handbag; and, indeed, she needed it—heavens, how she needed it!

"I think you'd better go home and pack now and I'll get Dora to drive round and fetch you, say at five o'clock?" asked Mr. Lewis Whiteman.

"I'll be ready," she cried, and moved off to the door.

V.

"THE only thing I'm not quite sure of," said Mr. Whiteman, "is what we must do if the winner is a married man. A thousand a year is all right, and he might let the house; but a wife as well!" And Mr. Whiteman scratched the top of his head.

He, Mrs. Whiteman, and Sylvia were sitting in the Whiteman drawing-room, and it was that cosy hour after dinner, when the coffee has been handed round, the Day-dream Cigarette is well alight, and the cares that infest the day have folded their tents like the Arabs and as silently *imshi-ed* away.

Dora Whiteman came to the rescue.

"If the winner is already married, give him the right to nominate somebody else; he may have a son or a nephew or a friend——"

"Or an enemy," added Sylvia; "for I can be most awfully disagreeable if I like."

"That's it," cried Mr. Whiteman. "He'll be entitled to pass it on, and it isn't our business to inquire what terms he makes with the other fellow. And I've seen the

Bishop of Putney. He's going to draw the winning number out of a sack, and he'll conduct the wedding ceremony in his cathedral. A pleasant, fatherly old bird, we've taken quite a fancy to one another. And I've placed the contract for the publicity we're buying with Clark and Thring. The 'copy' will be fixed to-morrow, and there's a photographer coming in the morning, and I'd advise the new evening dress that you and Dora bought together. Clark and Thring cover the whole world; so you'll have your picture in every newspaper that amounts to anything in all six continents, counting North and South America. I have great hopes of America, in spite of the tariff. But we'll get round that. I'll send Maurice over there to buy a factory"; and so Mr. Lewis Whiteman ran on and on.

"I don't know about my photograph," said Sylvia; "especially if I'm anonymous. What's the good of being anonymous if they publish your picture everywhere?"

"But nobody'll recognize it. They never can. And I know what! We'll dress you like a bride, with a veil and orange blossoms and a bunch of flowers, and you can put your face in them, and what with the veil——"

"Lewis, you're a genius!" cried Mrs. Whiteman. "And it'll be ever so much more realistic than just an ordinary girl. Sylvia'll be a bride, and there'll be the house and cheque. The very thing! And nobody will recognize her unless she wants them to. And I can see a whole page in every newspaper, and bills stuck up on walls and hoardings, and if everybody doesn't know Daydream by then, they never will!"

Sylvia finished her cigarette seated between these two enthusiasts. Yet she was bound to agree that the idea was a good one, and that neither her mother, nor Aunt Maria, nor Uncle Bill would find her out. So early next day Mrs. Whiteman took her shopping, and they came back with a wedding dress, white veil, shower bouquet, and orange blossoms all complete, stripped off the back, head, and hands of a wax model in the window of Harridge's; and when they were ready, the photographer, who stayed to lunch, took ten different pictures in the greenhouse beyond the drawing-room. And as these were developed and you looked at them, you only saw a very graceful and slender bride with her nose stuck in a shower bouquet. Very attractive, very charming, and very delightful; but nobody in the whole wide world would ever identify this with Mr. Wordie's ex-stenographer or cry aloud that here was Sylvia Millicent Harlow.

VI.

IT was all timed to go off on the thirtieth of June; and if you had looked into any tobacconist's on that midsummer morning, you would have seen a display of Daydream Cigarettes, in tens, twenties, fifties, and hundreds, very tastefully boxed; a stack of Daydream Mixture, done up in one-ounce and two-ounce packets and quarter and half-pound tins; and a show-case of Daydream Pipes, each pipe resting on a bed of real crimson plush and shaped in one or another of the twelve Daydream patterns.

"I've thought it over," Sylvia
"What?" they

And in each window, too, was a dummy half-guinea parcel and a coloured placard, thirty-four inches by twenty-nine. "A WIFE, A HOUSE, AND A THOUSAND A YEAR," was printed in large capitals at the head of it, and three hands and three index fingers pointed at—

(1) A bride in white veil and orange blossoms.

(2) A rose-covered cottage standing in its own scented garden.

(3) A cheque drawn on Barclay's Bank for twenty thousand pounds, signed Whiteman, French, and Co. with a flourish.

The cottage was called Daydream Cottage and the cheque was payable to "Mr. Daydream," whoever he might be. And when you had taken in all this, you could read about the half-guinea parcel, and the coupon with number attached, and the Bishop of Putney, who would draw the winning number on the morning of November the first next, so as to give the entire habitable globe a chance.

And if you had looked into your newspaper on that midsummer morning, or evening too, for that matter, you would have found an entire page about Sylvia and the house and income and all the rest of it, as Mrs. Whiteman had predicted. And on hoardings and walls and at railway stations. Why, even old Mrs. Harlow and Aunt Maria and the chickens couldn't escape it!

"That firm you're engaged with now," Mrs. Harlow wrote *at once*, "aren't they pushing and aren't they enterprising! Not a bit like that poor Mr. Wordie! And I do so wonder what the young man will be like, though I wouldn't have the courage to face him myself, even though I did have a house and a thousand a year. And to think that the Bishop of Putney is going to conduct the wedding ceremony, and in his own cathedral too! But your Aunt Maria says she prefers chickens to a husband won in a lottery. . . ." There were four pages of it, which we will spare the busy reader. And as Mrs. Harlow and Aunt Maria were chattering, so were millions and millions of other people; and that was exactly what Messrs. Whiteman, French, and Co. were after. Yet no one suspected Sylvia, and, truth to tell, that made it all the more mysterious and alluring.

began, "and I've decided——" almost shrieked.

The expense, of course, was enormous at the start, but when the first million parcels had been disposed of, which was early in August, Mr. Whiteman began to accumulate a credit balance, and by the end of the month his original capital had returned to him together with Mr. Maurice French's and the money that had been furnished by their wives; and the goodwill of the business was now worth a cool million, or at least Mr. Whiteman said it was, and most

probably he was right. For he really had put three excellent lines upon the market, and apart from coupons and parcels the Daydream products were keeping the place they had so brilliantly and unexpectedly carved out for themselves in a trade which, viewed superficially, might already seem overcrowded.

"We've done it!" cried Mr. Whiteman, on the morning of the twenty-ninth of August. "And now we can all go to Folkestone and take a look at the sea."

They went: Mr. Lewis Whiteman, Dora Whiteman, and Sylvia Harlow.

VII.

AT the hotel, everybody was talking about the Daydream coupons and parcels. Young men with whom Sylvia danced or went bathing confessed to having bought a dozen or so just to try their luck. And old and middle-aged men were just as bad, and, having more money to spend, were even worse. The entire hotel seemed to reek of Daydream Mixture smoked out of Daydream Pipes, or Daydream Cigarettes smoked neat or through holders. But there was one young man who didn't smoke at all; and he was the only young man as far as Sylvia was concerned; and, moreover, he had just said, "I think that girl must be a rotter."

"What girl?" asked Sylvia.

"The one that's marrying the fellow who draws the winning number."

"Perhaps she's so desperately hard up, and out of a job, and doesn't want to sponge on her old people——"

"That's no excuse. I'd sooner sweep a crossing or go as a housemaid, or anything," interrupted the other. "I've been hard up and out of a job. You know I have, Sylvia!"

"I know you have, Jimmie; and that's why we're both here like this, instead of being married or engaged."

"It's not too late, is it?"

"It is, Jimmie."

The young man, as the reader may have guessed, was none other than that "Mr. Baines" referred to by Sylvia's mother in the letter she had written "*at once*," and the "Jimmie Baines" of Sylvia's regrets when she had made her great decision or had sat through her first interview with the two partners. Jimmie had sought her out again, and now, too late, he had found her.

Only yesterday he had arrived at the hotel. Sunburnt and opulent, lavish and perfectly dressed, it was difficult for Sylvia to realize that this was the same Jimmie Baines she had turned down two years ago because, being a clerk with an insurance company and drawing a measly salary, which increased at the rate of ten pounds *per annum*, he would only be in a position to marry when he had reached the ripe age of one hundred and two.

"I'm not cut out for a Mrs. Methuselah," Sylvia had said, speaking up, tearfully yet firmly, at their last interview. "It's best to be honest about it. We'd both wilt and get sick of one another. I'm sorry, Jimmie, for you are one of the few good men who've come back from the war; and that makes it all the harder."

"Curse the rotten old war!" Jimmie had replied. "I've lost four good years through it, and this damned insurance job's the only job I can find. I wish I had stayed out in France with a cross on top of me, like all the best fellows."

It hurt most dreadfully, but Sylvia had had the courage to say "No"; and here was Jimmie Baines, by something more than a coincidence, come back into her life and apparently rolling in filthy lucre.

She had changed the conversation, which was growing unpleasantly personal; for had he not, a moment or two ago, just as good as called her a "rotter" to her face?

"What are you doing now?" she had asked. "You've chucked that old insurance company—mean, stingy things!"

"When you said you wouldn't marry me I didn't care what happened; and yet it was the best thing anyone ever did to me! I needed waking up. I owe you everything," Jimmie had answered.

"Do tell me!" cried Sylvia. "What came afterwards, and what are you doing now? Real business, instead of entering figures in books like a machine? Do tell me!"

"I can't. Perhaps I will some day, when it's over and I've retired. I give it another six months——"

"Is it honest?" she had interrupted, grown suddenly serious.

"You don't bother about that; you take a sporting chance——"

"Just like me," murmured Sylvia, under her breath.

"There's lots of money in it. Let's get married, Sylvia, and I'll chuck it now. I can afford to."

The old passion was in Jimmie's voice as he spoke. He had seized her hand and his face was very close to hers. Beyond the cliffs the sea sparkled in the moonlight and a band was making music in the distance. They were alone in this secluded corner of the hotel, a veranda with its banks of palms and flowers.

"I've never forgotten you," he whispered. "All the work I've done, all the money I've made, has been done and made for you. And when I've taken chances, I saw you, and when it came off—always you—— If it hadn't been for you, I'd never have

"You were right to say 'No' in the old days; but, now you can say 'Yes,' say it!"

begun. You were right to say 'No' in the old days; but, now you can say 'Yes,' say it!"

His pleading face had come quite close to hers; and she loved him, loved him, loved him!

"I can't," she answered, softly. "There are reasons. Oh, Jimmie!" And she let him take her in his arms and kiss her till their hearts ached.

"Why not?" he cried at last. "Who's to stop us? I've waited for this moment, and worked for it. I've followed you all the time; and as soon as I'd made good I went off to find you—you'd left your old place—of course, I knew that—and your mother told me about this new one, and how you were staying down here with the Whitemans. I've hardly lost you out of my sight for a single minute. And now that I'm well off, who's to stop us?"

"I can't. I've promised," she answered. "I'll tell you some day. When it's over and I've—retired." She was echoing his own words, but she couldn't tell him. He would hate her, hate her, and despise her!

'I'm going in," she said, rising. "Forget me—forget all about me. It can't be helped. Things always happen when it's far too late. A year ago—six months ago—but now, Jimmie—I've given my word and I'm going to play the game."

Sylvia was gone. He gazed at the spot where a moment earlier she had stood, ghostly, with the sadness of her voice quivering athwart the moonlight.

"She's engaged to some other fellow," he thought; "and Sylvia's like that. She'd sooner die than break her word. I know her."

Next morning there was no Jimmie Baines in the hotel and Sylvia went a-driving and a-bathing with Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Whiteman.

"What's the matter?" asked Dora. "You're not looking yourself, dear."

"I don't think I am myself," Sylvia answered; "at least, my old one."

"We've passed a million and a half, and two million's our limit," said Mr. Lewis Whiteman; "at two million parcels we shut down."

VIII.

THE two million limit, fixed by Messrs. Whiteman, French, and Co., was reached on the twenty-fifth day of September. They had hardly expected it would come so quickly; but many people had bought up parcels by the score, and though Mr. Whiteman was now wishing he had fixed the limit at four million and offered two wives, two houses, and two thousands a year, he had to close down in accordance with the terms of his stupendous and unprecedented advertisement. In any case, it had done the trick and Daydream was now a household word.

The announcement was duly made in the newspapers, and, the Bishop of Putney graciously consenting, it was agreed that he should draw the winning number on the morning of October the first instead of waiting till November.

Sylvia did not mind. With the departure of Jimmie Baines she did not care what happened, and if ever he learned the appalling truth he would be glad that he had escaped her. October the first came round, the fatal day for which the holders of two million coupons were watching out. Sylvia spent it in the country.

When she returned to London she bought a *Star* and an *Evening News*. The winner's number was one million two hundred and seventy-five thousand six hundred and forty-three, and he was a Mr. Joseph Peat, of Goat Springs, Pinjarra, Western Australia.

IX.

MR. JOSEPH PEAT, the holder of the winning coupon, No. 1,275,643, had become "Jo Peat" by nightfall, "Old Jo" early next morning, and reverted to "Joseph" by the afternoon. The large-hearted populace of six continents had taken to him, and in these days, when wireless and the electric cable make light of distance, it required but a bare forty-eight hours to reveal this fortunate gentleman, who, in the newspaper dispatches, became "Mr. Joseph Peat" again.

Both the special and syndicated news reports agreed that he was a middle-aged widower with four children, the owner of a small sheep-run, and in not too affluent circumstances. He had latterly been looking out for a second Mrs. Peat, but, receiving no encouragement, had retired to his little property, where he had come across a copy of the *Perth Times* containing the famous Daydream offer. He had only purchased one parcel and had never expected to prove the winner. He had a large red beard, small green eyes, and a carbuncle on his nose; his figure was massive rather than agreeable, and, in addition, he was bow-legged and short in the neck. In brief, it was easy for Sylvia, reading between the lines, to discover that only the law of libel had restrained both the agencies and special despatch writers from describing Mr. Joseph Peat with more actuality. He had sold his sheep-run, handed his four children over to a neighbour, and was starting immediately for London to claim his prize. With ordinary weather he would arrive towards the latter part of November.

Sylvia had barely mastered these widely-read despatches when, in the same newspaper and at the head of the next column, her eye chanced to fall upon a third cablegram, dated from New York and topped by three alarming captions. "Famous Bootlegger Escapes" came first; "Lost in the Fog" followed; and "Feared Drowned" finished it off. Nor would this tragedy in miniature have interested her particularly had not the name "James Baines" somehow started forward from the sheet. There it was, not once but thrice, in the body of this mysterious telegram. With a beating heart, she read the entire message.

It ran:—

"Early yesterday afternoon United States Revenue officers, led by Captain E. F. Worley, Divisional Commander of the Coastguard Service, boarded and seized the notorious steam yacht *Kantara*, which, during the last two years, has plied continuously between Glasgow and the North American coast, loaded up with whisky, gin, champagne, and other forbidden liquors. So far all attempts to deal with this notorious rum-runner had proved abortive, but to-day, taking advantage of a dense fog and certain information which proved to be accurate, a surprise party caught her napping, and she now lies, snug and secure, in New York Harbour.

"It must be admitted, however, that the bulk of her cargo had already disappeared, and has no doubt been disposed of at the usual lucrative rates; while James Baines, the leading spirit in this enterprise on your side of the Atlantic, whom the Prohibition officers had hoped to capture, made good his escape under singular daring circumstances.

"The officers, using a fast motor-launch, had boarded the vessel, leaving one of their number in charge of the launch. James Baines, quick to notice this, let himself down the *Kantara's* side by a rope, surprised the unfortunate officer, flung him overboard, started the motor-launch, and disappeared in the fog. No news of Baines has so far come to hand, and it seems possible that both he and the launch may have gone down in the gale which sprang up towards sundown and is still raging off the North Atlantic

coast. A sharp look-out, however, is being kept for him.

"This James Baines is said to be an ex-British officer with a good war record; indeed, it is said that he won both the D.S.O. and the M.C., besides gaining the French *croix de guerre* with palms. On leaving the Army, Baines found a minor position with an insurance company, but, being dissatisfied with his prospects, became first a supercargo in the rum-running industry, and then, having shown conspicuous courage and resource during a couple of desperate fights with 'high-jackers,' was given a substantial interest and full control of the European end of the business. A 'high-jacker,' it should be noted, is the name given to those modern pirates who hold up and rob the rum-running vessels on the high seas. Though normally well-dressed and, indeed, something of a dandy, Baines is an adept at disguise, utterly reckless, and, if not drowned, may even yet give trouble to his pursuers."

Sylvia laid the sheet aside. "James" Baines? It must be her "Jimmie." Adrift in a small boat and at the mercy of a North Atlantic gale! Maybe drowned; maybe lost to her for ever. Here was the explanation of his sudden rise to wealth. He had done all this for her; and now—— She had bound herself to marry a Mr. Joseph Peat, of Goat Springs, Pinjarra, Western Australia; a middle-aged, hairy widower, with a beard and four children; with bandy legs, no neck, and a carbuncle on his nose. Poor Jimmie! If he were lost, he would at least have been spared the knowledge of that horror!

X.

THE first authentic portrait of Mr. Joseph Peat, the fortunate winner of the Day-dream wife, house, and income, appeared in an issue of the *Daily Pictorial* dated October the twenty-third, a good three weeks ahead of any of its rivals. Lord Rotherbrook himself had seen to this, and relays of airmen had flown from Pinjarra to Bombay with the original plates and there handed over to a fast mail-boat. The pictures were taken in seven different positions, seated, standing, full-face, and profile; and there were additional pictures of the Peat home at Goat Springs, the four children, the sheep, goats, and two horses which were subsequently sold. The photographer-cum-correspondent described him as rather a rough diamond; and it was again evident that only the law of libel had saved Mr. Joseph Peat from a more realistic exposure.

Sylvia, studying her copy of the *Daily Pictorial*, felt a sudden sinking at the knees. She had a wild desire to rush off to her mother and Aunt Maria and hide herself among the chickens. Especially as, day after day, she had looked through the newspapers and found no trace of the missing Jimmie. *His* portrait, too, had appeared, obtained Heaven alone knew how; and it *was* Jimmie, in the clothes he had worn when with the insurance company, and not half so smart or so good-looking as when he had come to her seven weeks ago in Folkestone.

"I—I'm going off to mother's for a bit," she said at last, "till—till Mr. Peat lands in England."

"You won't let us down?" asked Mr. Whiteman, growing alarmed.

"No; I told you I'd play the game. I've played it so far, haven't I?"

"It's been easy sailing so far."

"Has it?" answered Sylvia. "It's little you know," she added, under her breath; and next, "If only I could find out what has become of Jimmie!"

By the evening, Sylvia, who had telegraphed to advise them, was seated between her mother and Aunt Maria.

"I'm sure it was very kind of Mr. Whiteman to let you come—the paper's full of him and those cigarettes and that horrid old man in Australia. If I were the girl, I'd make him shave off that beard first thing, and there are specialists who can treat a carbuncle. And do tell us, Sylvia, who the girl is. You're sure to know, being Mr. Whiteman's secretary." Thus old Mrs. Harlow ran on, nearly driving Sylvia crazy.

And next came Aunt Maria.

"I don't believe a word of it," she said. "It's like that chicken-food they advertise in the newspapers. Guaranteed to make them lay, winter and summer, and not an egg more and not an egg less do you get out of it!"

"But surely the Bishop of Putney——" interposed old Mrs. Harlow.

"I don't believe in bishops," said Aunt Maria. "Men are all alike; and a bishop's only a man after all. But if that girl likes to sell herself for a home and a good income, it's her business, not ours. Lots of 'em do, and she won't be the only one."

Thus Aunt Maria and thus old Mrs. Harlow; and now there was as little peace for Sylvia in the country as in London. She bought a newspaper every morning, but there was no further news of Jimmie; yet of the mysterious and unknown bride of the fortunate Australian, and the products of Messrs. Whiteman, French, and Co., there was news enough and to spare.

XI.

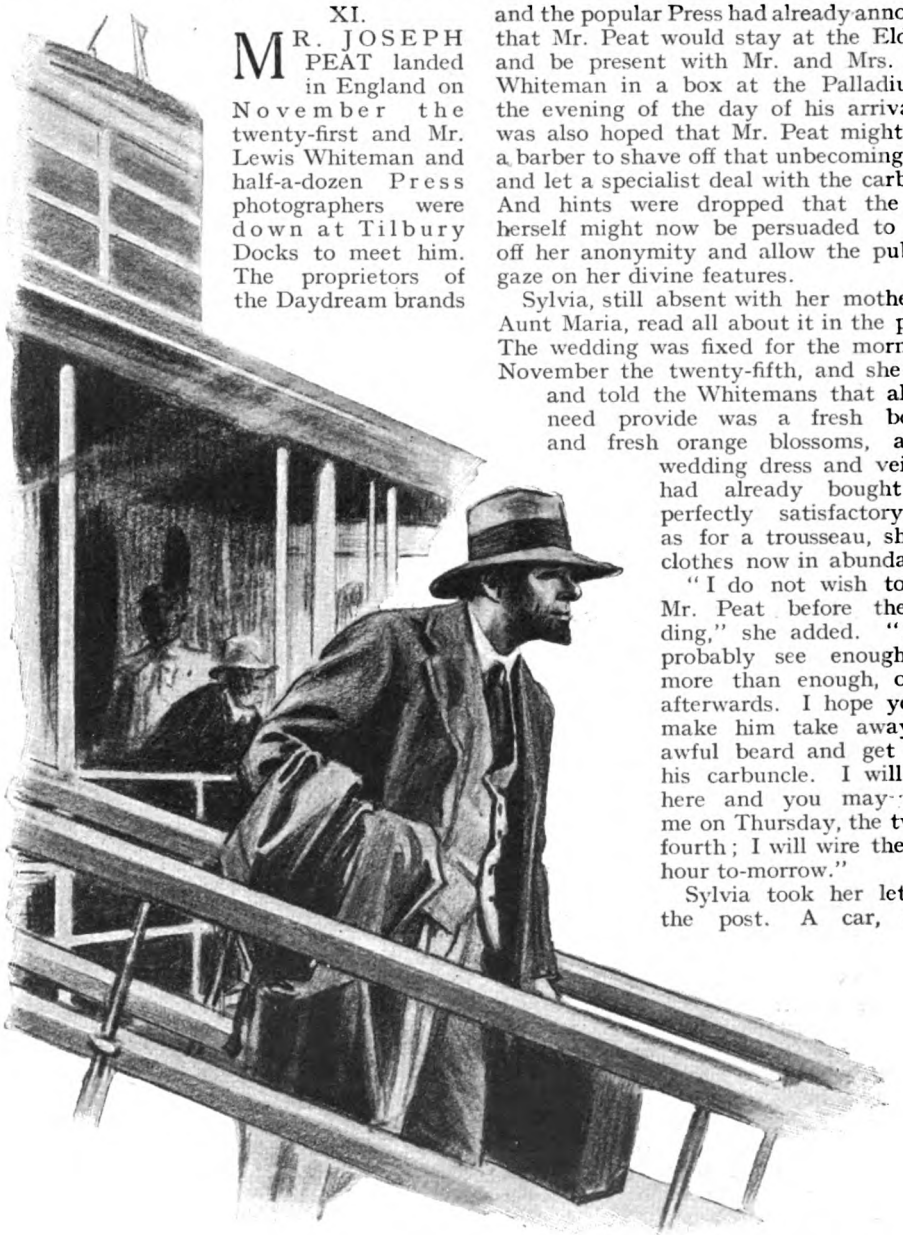
MR. JOSEPH PEAT landed in England on November the twenty-first and Mr. Lewis Whiteman and half-a-dozen Press photographers were down at Tilbury Docks to meet him. The proprietors of the Daydream brands had done the thing in style, for not only had they placed a high-powered car, painted a bright scarlet, at Mr. Peat's disposal, but a suite at the Eldorado Hotel was waiting for him, and Mr. Whiteman was ready with his own tailor, Cook, of Conduit Street, than whom there is no better in the world.

The car hit you slap between the eyes, and was in itself an excellent advertisement; and the popular Press had already announced that Mr. Peat would stay at the Eldorado and be present with Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Whiteman in a box at the Palladium on the evening of the day of his arrival. It was also hoped that Mr. Peat might allow a barber to shave off that unbecoming beard and let a specialist deal with the carbuncle. And hints were dropped that the bride herself might now be persuaded to throw off her anonymity and allow the public to gaze on her divine features.

Sylvia, still absent with her mother and Aunt Maria, read all about it in the papers. The wedding was fixed for the morning of November the twenty-fifth, and she wrote and told the Whitemans that all they need provide was a fresh bouquet and fresh orange blossoms, as the wedding dress and veil they had already bought were perfectly satisfactory, and as for a trousseau, she had clothes now in abundance.

"I do not wish to meet Mr. Peat before the wedding," she added. "I shall probably see enough, and more than enough, of him afterwards. I hope you will make him take away that awful beard and get rid of his carbuncle. I will leave here and you may expect me on Thursday, the twenty-fourth; I will wire the exact hour to-morrow."

Sylvia took her letter to the post. A car, driven furiously, was charging up the lane. It stopped, and her heart leapt; for, somehow, she was certain. And next she was really and truly in Jimmie's arms, openly, publicly, in full view of Aunt Maria and the



When Mr. Joseph Peat landed in England, Mr. Lewis Whiteman and half-a-dozen Press photographers were down at Tilbury Docks to meet him.

chickens. She clung to him as though, indeed, he had arisen from the drowned and dead. And, "Bless you, darling!" he whispered. "I'm not too late—if I had been—I've shivered with funk all the way over!"

"But you can't—you can't really care," she began; "or you won't do when I've told you——"

"Oh, that!" he said. "It was that brought me racing back. I'm glad of it. I saw through it at last. At last!" he repeated. "And then I rushed. Thank God, I'm in time!"

"But you said, or as good as said, I was a rotter. Don't you hate me? You can't know everything."

"'Perhaps she's so desperately hard up, and out of a job, and doesn't want to sponge on her old people': that's what you said about the girl, didn't you?"

Sylvia nodded.

"I call it jolly brave of her. And you're just a kid, a darling kid, and kids don't think beyond the moment. That's where we old men come in. I figured it all out in hospital. It came suddenly. A first-class brain-wave. Suffering's a good thing—clears one's head. I found you out there; and, by gum, it cured me! I put down the newspaper with that damned advertisement, howled for my clothes, and took the first boat over."

"Then you weren't drowned or nearly drowned?"

"Only nearly. An American skipper picked me up, coasting to Savannah. My word, but those good old Yanks were decent! Not one of them gave me away, though I suppose every one of them knew who I was and might have made money by

holding me. And that old skipper wouldn't take a cent; and when we reached harbour, he just said I was one of the crew and dumped me down in hospital."

"You're all right now?" Sylvia asked, anxiously.

"Never better. I'd caught cold or something—the doctors called it pneumonia. At any rate, it isn't catching"; and Jimmie Baines demonstrated anew and in the most practical fashion that there was no danger.

"Then you don't hate me at all?" Sylvia asked, looking up at him.

"Good Lord, I'm only a successful rum-runner, aren't I? I thought that out in the hospital as well and on the ship and everywhere."

"But all this doesn't let *me* out, does it?" asked Sylvia, suddenly.

"Surely—surely——" Jimmie began.

"I've given my word to the Whitemans; and they've played the game with me. They've been straight and square all through—no, I won't hear a word against them," as Jimmie protested. "You can't deny it. And now, if I go back on them—Jimmie, I'm not that sort."

"No, you're not," he said, slowly. "They took good care of that, damn them!" He recovered his coolness. "You mean it?" he asked.

"Is there any other way?" she answered; and next, "Don't think—don't think——" and the tears choked her.

"That's all right, Syl—that's all right." He was standing clear now. "So it's war between me and Messrs. Whiteman, French, and Co.," he said at last. And then, slowly again, "I rather enjoy war, now I come to think of it. You go right ahead, kid. I'm not going to worry you. But we'll win. I'd best be off, Syl."

Quickly, briefly, suddenly, he held her to him and their lips met for a moment. Then he was in the car again and speeding, his face set towards London.

Sylvia went on and posted her letter, dry-eyed now. No, she had made her bargain, her feckless, silly bargain; and Jimmie was quite right: she *was* a rotter.

In this new mood of humility she came back to her mother and Aunt Maria and the chickens; while Jimmie Baines, arrived in London, had driven straight to the Eldorado Hotel and was now under the same roof as Mr. Joseph Peat.

XII.

IT had not been very difficult for James Baines, the revived and successful rum-runner, to become a nine days' wonder on his own account. A telephone message to the *Daily Pictorial*, another to the *Morning News*, and, lo and behold! the thing was done. And, consequently, it was easy enough for Jimmie to find himself *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Joseph Peat—they were the Eldorado's two star turns of the moment. Or with Mr. Lewis Whiteman, for that matter; or with Mr. Wallis, who managed the Australian department and who was to act as Peat's best man at the wedding. But there was nothing to be done with Lewis Whiteman, and Wallis was merely a cipher. So Jimmie decided to concentrate upon old Jo.

Sylvia, riding up to London on the Thursday morning, read bits about them in the newspaper. And Sylvia wondered.

On the Thursday evening, however, Jimmie Baines was closeted with Joseph Peat, and they were in Jimmie's sitting-room that overlooked the Park, with the right kind of drink on the table and two large tumblers and a flat box of cigars.

"Look here, Mr. Peat," young Jimmie was saying, "as you don't seem to have any friends who'll tell you the truth, I'm going to be perfectly plain with you."

"Go ahead; I'm listening," answered the Australian.

"You're new to England, and you're going to make a confounded hash of things. Don't you see they're using you and you're just a pawn in a damned dirty game?"

"Go ahead," repeated the other.

"The girl can't care a tinker's cuss about you," cried Jimmie, warming; "so why not compromise? Make her an offer. She's stony-broke, or else she wouldn't have entered. And perhaps she's got a good man of her own. Most girls have. You've a right to nominate some other fellow. You can make your own terms, or nearly. Take seven hundred a year; take the lot! It's not too late, Peat, even now."

"Did she put you up to this?" asked Joseph Peat.

"No, she didn't."

"Then why not leave well alone?"

"It isn't well—it can't be—stands to reason. You're no spring chicken, are you? Excuse my frankness, Jo, but you're rather too old for the job; and girls are girls, and you've not won a beauty prize, and won't ever. Why not marry a woman of the right sort who'll make you comfortable?"

Mr. Joseph Peat sat silent; and when Jimmie was done, "Look you here, young fellow," he said; "I've heard that tale and other tales. But I've had a pretty tough time of it for forty years, and now I'm on velvet I'm taking no chances. I've struck my bit of luck, the first in a lifetime, and I'm not going to monkey with it. That's the answer."

He looked, and he was, as immovable as

the buffalo which he much resembled, with his red beard, his shock of rufous hair, his small green eyes, his thick neck, and massive shoulders.

"What about the girl's feelings?" pursued Jimmie, thoughtfully.

"I've won her fair and square, and I mean to stick to her."

"But supposing she don't stick to you?"

"When I get her out in Western Australia and she's got four kids to look after and the house and what not, and the nearest neighbour fifteen miles away——"

"Good Lord, is that it?" cried Jimmie.

"——she'll stick all right," finished Mr. Joseph Peat, "though I do grant that I'm not much of an attraction. Still, a husband's a husband, isn't he? You can't deny that. And a good home's a good home, isn't it? You can't deny that." And Peat, more obstinate and set than ever, sat rigid in his chair and glared across at Jimmie Baines.

"Well, there's one more argument," said Jimmie, playing his last card in the open game; "a particular friend of mine wants to marry the girl and she most particularly wants to marry him. He's willing to pay your price. Name it! You can't want to marry a woman you've never seen, and money's money."

"So that's what you're after?" muttered Mr. Joseph Peat.

"It is," responded Jimmie.

"A particular friend of yours?"

"Most particular."

"He's in this hotel; he's in this room, ain't he?"

"He is."

"Well, you can tell him with my compliments that there's nothing doing."

"Sure?"

"Sure. You can tell him that I'm going to marry the girl"; and Jo Peat sat upright. "You can tell him that Whiteman's money's good enough for me. It's in the bank and waiting. Where's yours? Why, you're a scamp that ought to be in jail! A rascally smuggler, aren't you? That's all I know about *you*, Mr. Baines. I'm going back to my own room. You're one of those London crooks I've been warned against. Look here, Mr. Baines, if it's your right name, there's nothing doing."

"That's your last word?"

"First and last," and Joseph Peat, rising to his bandy legs, his green eyes fierce and flaming, emptied his tumbler at a single gulp and moved towards the door. "Good night to you!" he cried, and turned the handle. "Let me out!" he bellowed; for the door was locked.

"You'd better stay here," said Jimmie, rising.

Peat's hairy hand was pressed against his eyes; for the room had suddenly begun to swim, his heart was standing still, and his poor head—— "Doped!" he cried, in his blindness.

"Yes, doped. I gave you a fair chance. You shouldn't have finished that drink, and you were far too busy talking"; and Jimmie seized the big man by the shoulders and steered him to the sofa. Next moment Jo Peat collapsed, went down like a struck bullock or a corpse, and was presently sunk in a profound slumber.

Jimmie went through his pockets, took the key of his suite, undressed him, and put him carefully into bed. Then, going to the telephone, he rang up the night clerk in the office.

"No, not until I ring," he finished; "I don't want to be disturbed—I'm having a day in bed—you'll pass that on to the floor-waiters and the chambermaid? Thank you."

He hung up the receiver and tiptoed in to Mr. Joseph Peat.

"Rum-running's rather an education; beats sheep-running, don't it, Jo?"

The recumbent figure gave no answer.

"And as for that old insurance company," Jimmie pursued, "I'd sooner be one of Aunt Maria's chickens!"

XIII.

EVEN Mr. Lewis Whiteman had a momentary qualm when Joseph Peat, carbuncle, bright red beard, and bandy legs, all complete, and followed by Mr. Wallis, his groomsman, stepped out of the scarlet car and mounted the steps of Putney Cathedral. He was, at least, punctual; and that was about all that could be said for him, thought Mr. Lewis Whiteman. The crowd gave him a cheer, and he turned and faced them, a grin on his hairy lips, his new silk hat pressed to the bosom of his new tail-coat. Then he entered the cathedral.

Admission was by ticket. The bishop had been firm on that. "You can advertise as much as you like in Walworth," he had said to Mr. Whiteman, "but there's going to be no Daydreaming in my cathedral." So the poor old crowd had to stay outside; and it was only a small and carefully selected company that presented itself and was admitted by Mr. Groom, the verger.

There was Maurice French, newly arrived from America, and with him were Mrs. French and Kathleen and Eleanor French, who were acting as bridesmaids, two tiny toddlers in pink and pale blue. And of

course there was Dora Whiteman, with a carefully selected group of *her* friends, and the leading personages of the great factory in Walworth. Sylvia herself had asked nobody, nor had Mr. Peat found any acquaintance whose company he particularly desired—it was the first time Sylvia had set eyes on the monster. The *Daily Pictorial* was represented by a very young man in black with grey trousers and white spats and shiny hat, while a tall young lady with the fashionable up-and-down figure had come on behalf of the *Morning News*. It was all rather a cold ending to what had looked so remarkably thrilling and romantic in the advertisements. But the bishop was ready to do his duty, though he had hardly counted on such a customer as Mr. Joseph Peat. And he was doubly astonished when his kindly eye rested on Sylvia, so pale, so

still, yet so determined. "Beauty and the Beast," he murmured, under his breath; "it's not the first time and it won't be the last. Reminds me of His Grace the late Duke of Dorset; he had a beard like that and bandy legs."

THE ceremony ran its course, and Joseph Peat's deep "I will" was followed by Sylvia's equally clear responses. And as Mr. Whiteman gave away the bride he had a second and worse qualm. But no doubt Sylvia knew her own mind, he thought, as well as her own business; and now she had the thousand a year and could pick her own house. They had signed the papers that very morning; and Sylvia was a good girl, and the way she had played the game——

From these reflections he was aroused by a joyous peal of bells, a ringing and a dinning that nearly shook the cathedral. The wedding was over; and next they all trooped off to the vestry, where Dora Whiteman, unable to restrain herself any longer, simply flew at Sylvia and hugged her and kissed her on both cheeks. So did Lewis. So did Mr. and Mrs. Maurice French and the two French children in pink and pale blue. But nobody kissed poor old Joseph; he didn't seem to count. And when everybody had signed the register they all trooped off to the waiting cars, amid a shower of rice and confetti, and an old shoe for luck. And the crowd cheered, and

the Press-cameras clicked; and in the scarlet car sat bride and groom.

"The Eldorado Hotel, sir?" asked the chauffeur.

Joseph Peat nodded.

The wedding-breakfast was waiting, and Sylvia's going-away things and the bridegroom's ditto.

The car drove off, and then Jimmie Baines removed his carbuncle, took off that terrible beard, and straightened out his bandy legs. And next he kissed Sylvia and Sylvia kissed him.

"You didn't know me?" he asked.

"Not until you said 'I will,' when I was just getting ready to say 'I won't and I sha'n't.' For I couldn't have gone on with it; and if it hadn't been for your beautiful clear voice—— The newspapers said you were an 'adept at disguise'—'adept' isn't the word, Jimmie! But getting married under a wrong name—does it count?"

"It does, Syl."

"But what'll Mr. Whiteman say and the real Joseph Peat?"

"He's all right, Syl. I put him to bed last night and tucked him up and gave him a sleeping draught——"

"Oh, Jimmie!"

"We'll give him the house and the thousand a year——"

"But Mr. Whiteman and Mrs. Whiteman and all of them——" began Sylvia.

"They can eat the wedding-breakfast and make the speeches; and the newspapers will simply lap it up, and there'll be more free advertising and more publicity; and that, all said and done, is what they're after. I say, Syl, we'll change into real clothes as soon as we get to the hotel. My car's waiting. And then we'll drive down to your Aunt Maria's and get married like decent Christians."

And Sylvia leant back in the car; and "Whatever you say, Jim, is right," she whispered. "You ought to have the Victoria Cross as well as the D.S.O. and the M.C. and the French one; for you've saved my life, dear, haven't you?"

They all trooped off to the waiting cars, amid a shower of rice and confetti, and an old shoe for luck.

A MARIE CORELLI REVELATION.

A Romantic Episode in Her Life.

ONE OF HER FINEST PLOTS PRESENTED TO A FRIEND.

With an explanatory note by

Coulson Kernahan

THIS is the strange and even romantic story of the very remarkable document here reproduced.

It did not, when I first saw it, surprise me, for I already had reason to know how great-hearted a woman was the writer, Miss Marie Corelli, whom I first met early in the 'nineties at an At Home held by Mr. Jerome K. Jerome in association with his magazine, *The Idler*, to which she and I contributed. The friendship then initiated continued without a break until her death. When Stephen Phillips was dying, I received from Miss Corelli a letter which is too long and too intimate to quote in full. It was to the effect that she had never met Phillips, but rumours had reached her that his life had not been wisely ordered, and that for the straits to which he had come he had only himself to thank.

Then, as with a gesture of contempt, she swept these rumours away to say that she paid no heed to them, and would not so much as listen to tittle-tattle against her fellow-authors when assailed by the envious or the mean. Why she wrote was to say that she understood Phillips to be ill and in poverty; and that if she could be of any help, by providing the means to send him out of the fogs and frosts of wintry England; to procure delicacies to tempt a failing appetite; or in any other way to help a true poet and a genius, fallen on evil days, she would think it a privilege to be allowed to do so.

MR. CLIFFORD HARRISON, the friend to whom Miss Marie Corelli presented one of her finest plots.

This is only one instance—others are known to me—of the material help which Marie Corelli was ready and glad to afford. Now to tell the story of help of quite another sort which she was equally eager to render.

From the only published biography of Miss Corelli known to me—it is by Mr. Kent Carr—I take the following passage :—

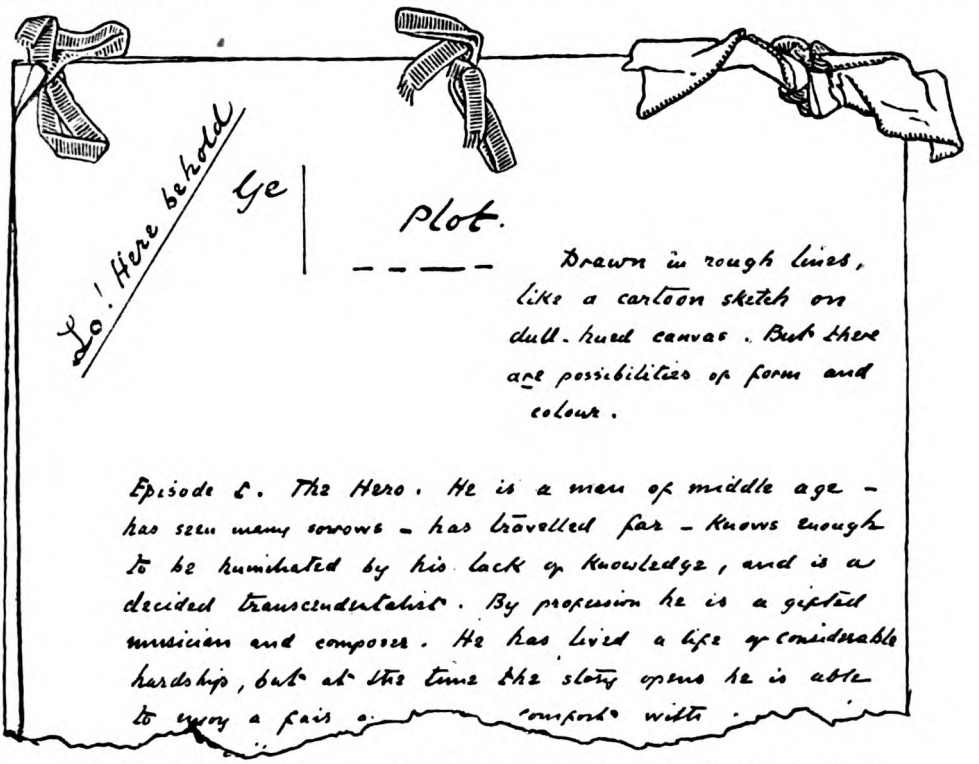
"Miss Corelli's supposed and reported 'hatred of men' is pure fiction. She has as many men-friends as women

—perhaps more. Among them, in the literary world, are Coulson Kernahan, Anthony Hope, Robert Hichens, Mortimer Menpes, Clifford Harrison, W. H. Wilkins, Sydney Whitman, and many of the French and Italian writers."

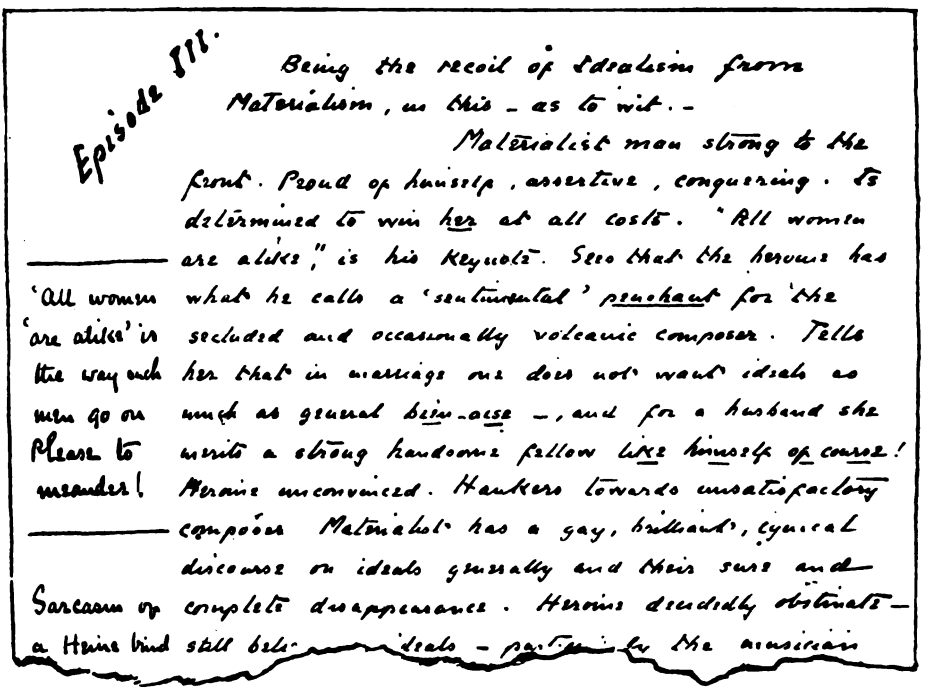
Clifford Harrison, here named—he was the brother of the Rev. William Harrison, who married Charles Kingsley's daughter Mary, better known as "Lucas Malet"—was no ordinary man. For his personality there is only one word—"mesmeric." He was more admired, in some cases one might without exaggeration say "more adored," by his "following," was more loved by his friends, than was any other man known to me; and by none was he more sincerely loved and admired than by Marie Corelli.

MISS MARIE CORELLI.

His recitals at Steinway Hall were the longest on record, lasting, as a rule, for thirty weeks in each year, and were crowded by distinguished audiences. Thirty years ago there existed something like a Clifford Harrison "cult." Few of that cult survive to-day, but should two of these survivors chance to meet, and the name of Clifford Harrison be men-



A reduced facsimile of part of the first page of the plot Miss Marie Corelli presented to Mr. Clifford Harrison.


Episode III.

Being the recoil of Idealism from Materialism, in this – as to wit. –

Materialist man strong to the front. Proud of himself, assertive, conquering. Is determined to win her at all costs. "All women are alike," is his keynote. Sees that the heroine has what he calls a 'sentimental' penchant for the secluded and occasionally volcanic composer. Tells her that in marriage one does not want ideals as much as general bien-aise –, and for a husband she wants a strong handsome fellow like himself of course! Heroine unconvinced. Hankers towards unsatisfactory composer. Materialist has a gay, brilliant, cynical discourse on ideals generally and their sure and complete disappearance. Heroine decidedly obstinate – still believes in ideals – particularly the musician

'All women are alike' is the way such men go on Please to meander!

Sarcasm of a Heine kind

A reduced facsimile from another page of the novel that never was written, showing the marginal notes, which in the original are in red ink.

tioned, the odds are that something like a Freemasonry is at once established between them.

Yet, to-day, the fact is not so much that he is forgotten by, as that his very name is unknown to, the majority of the public. Recitals, or the characters sustained in plays by actors, are so much a part of the reciter's, or the actor's, personality that few actors, and fewer reciters, are remembered, except as a tradition, once they have ceased to appear on stage or platform.

Was it because Marie Corelli realized this, and believed that the written word may survive, while the spoken word passes and is lost in space, like the breath with which it is uttered; was it because, loving Clifford Harrison as she did, and as all who knew him intimately loved him, she longed to see his fame assured, possibly for all time, in association with a work of imagination—was it for these reasons that she penned the document which is here for the first time published?

That she believed work of hers would survive may be gathered from her will, which the reader will have seen in the newspapers. Perhaps she had the same hope for the work of imagination, the plot of which is outlined in the document before us. Had she used that plot herself, the result might have been the most successful of all her novels. But when she gave, Marie Corelli gave greatly. A beautiful thought, George MacDonald tells us, is a more precious gift than the most priceless pearl or gem. It is something which he to whom it is given can make *his very own*. And so great a giver was Marie Corelli that she was glad to give, not only her thoughts, but something of her very self—to share, as it were, with another something of the immortality to which she believed herself destined, by preparing, and making over to that other, the plot of what she thought should prove a great novel.

Clifford Harrison, although a very exquisite and deeply philosophical writer for a limited public—no more illuminating essay on Music than his "Lute of Apollo" has ever been written—had long resisted Marie Corelli's anxiously-earnest solicitations to attempt a novel. He always maintained stubbornly that he was quite unable to invent or to handle a plot. So Marie, in her eager generosity, supplied the deficiency, removed, as she believed, the only obstacle between her friend and lasting fame.

It was in 1891, when Clifford Harrison was at the height of his reputation in

London, that Marie Corelli, then living at Longridge Road, Earl's Court, S.W., presented him with what to her must have been the very greatest gift she could offer. What loving pains she had lavished upon it, only she could know. Not only is the plot most completely detailed, but the writing of it out was evidently a labour of love. In all those eight long foolscap pages of manuscript *there is not one erasure*, not one slip of the pen. Evidently, if—as is possible (one needs to be a law-clerk to engross eight pages without the slightest slip)—she made an error, she tore that page up and wrote it again. In all my many years of editorial work I have never seen a manuscript so beautifully prepared. Every word is penned in her own beautiful handwriting, the plot itself in black, the headings and side notes in red ink, and the pages are fastened together with care that is almost sentimental by little bows of silk ribbon, of the colour she so often affected—a delicate pink. The manuscript opens with a romantically " Lo ! here behold ! "

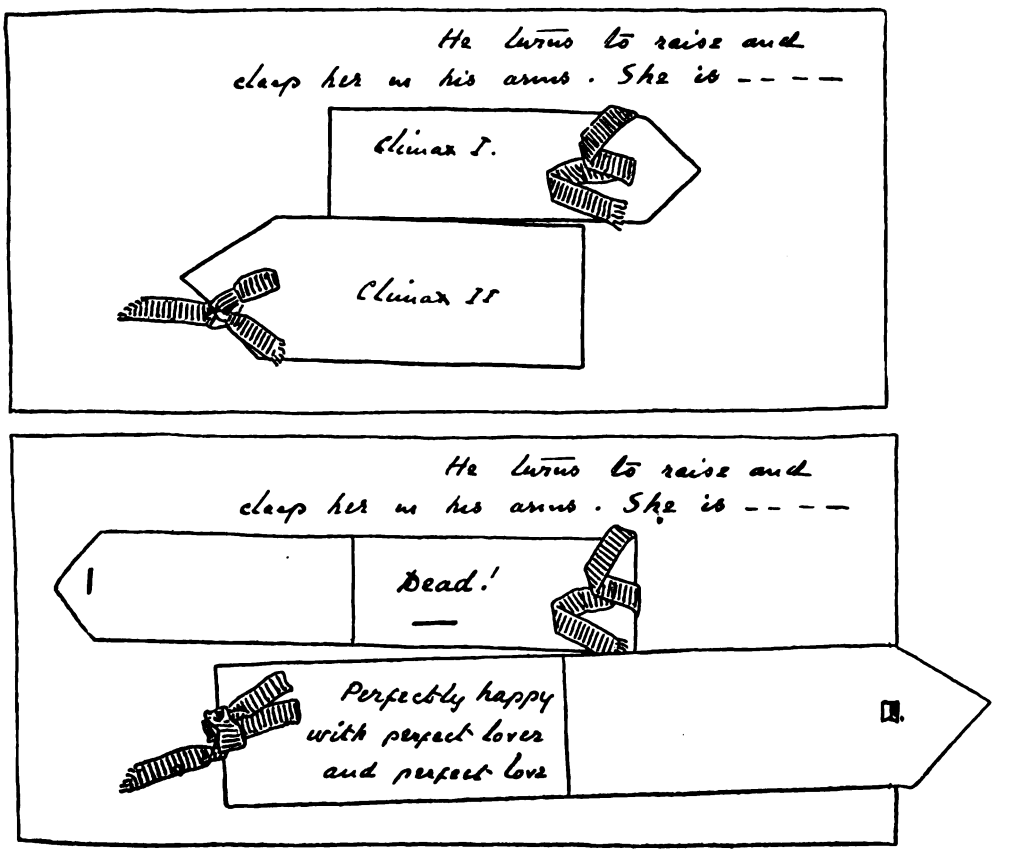
This half-playful note, smiling over the very real seriousness of her gift—making it perhaps easier for Clifford Harrison to accept—is reiterated again on the penultimate page of the MS. Almost like a schoolgirl, she prepared for him a " surprise."

There are two climaxes, each cunningly hidden away, as in a casket. We come, in our reading of the context, to the words : " He turns to raise and clasp her in his arms. She is —— " The rest is curtained from the reader's eye, under a slip of paper, inscribed " Climax I.," and secured by a bow of the same pink ribbon. Untying the bow, and drawing aside the curtain, we see the word—

" DEAD ! "

Or, in case a happy ending be chosen, under the slip, similarly tied, and inscribed " Climax II.," we read the words :—

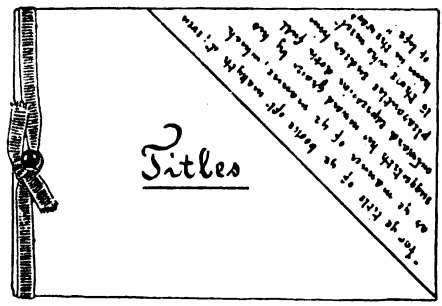
" Perfectly happy with perfect lover and perfect love."



The story was provided with two endings, as shown in the top illustration. On untying the ribbons and folding back the flaps the two climaxes are revealed.

Nor is this all. A sealed envelope is added, on which is written, "Not to be opened Till the Contents of the Roll demand it." We open the envelope to find yet another envelope, and within that yet another dainty manuscript, also tied with ribbon of the same pink silk. In a corner, as a "legend" for the proposed novel, is this charmingly chosen and appropriate quotation: "For ye title of ye booke oft makyth it; even as ye manner of ye manne, which suggesteth his inward graces by his outward expression, doth full pleasantlie endear him to those who meet him in the ways of life."

In the centre stands the word "Titles."



Marie Corelli penned many novels, but none more romantic or more beautiful than this wasted effort of hers, The Novel that Never was Written. Or was it wasted? Longfellow knew better when, in "Evangeline," he said:—

"Ye who believe in affection that hopes, and endures, and is patient.

"Ye who believe in the beauty and strength of woman's devotion,

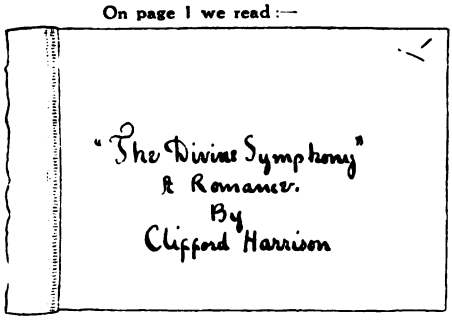
. . . .

Talk not of wasted affection; affection never was wasted.

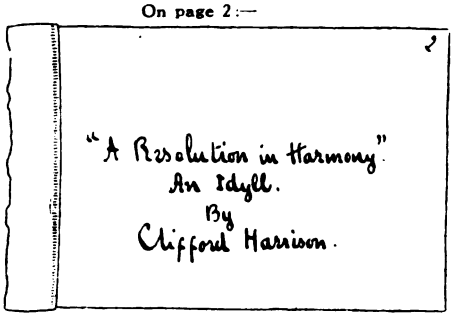
If it enrich not the heart of another, its waters, returning

Back to their springs like the rain, shall fill them full of refreshment."

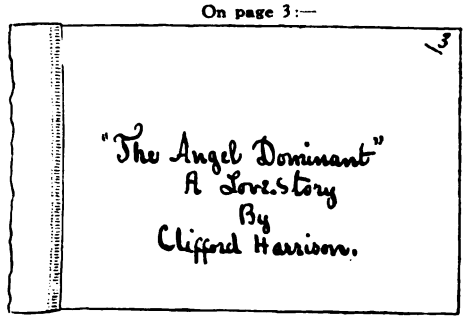
On page 1 we read:—



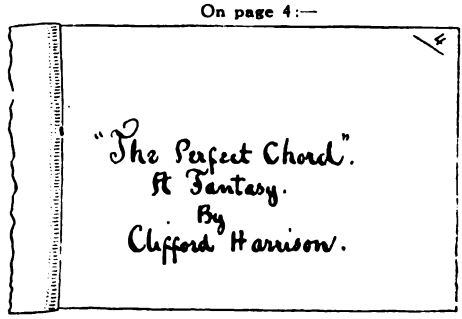
On page 2:—



On page 3:—



On page 4:—



The reader will observe that from the first page to the last Miss Corelli's own name never appears. What is already written, and thus freely given, and what is to be written, are to be "By Clifford Harrison," and by him only, with no mention of her.

Now follows the plot itself, every word of which, as I have already said, is in Miss Corelli's handwriting. The plot is written in black, the headings and side-notes (here printed in italics) are in red ink, while the pages are fastened with silk ribbon.

(The writer would like to express his sincerest thanks to Miss Bertha Vyver, who was Marie Corelli's sister-friend for so many years, and is now her literary heir; and to Mr. Herbert Hardinge, who was Clifford Harrison's dearest friend, and is now his executor, for their singular kindness and courtesy in according permission for the use of Miss Corelli's manuscript.)

Lo! Here behold

Ye Plot.

Drawn in rough lines, like a cartoon sketch on dull-hued canvas. But there are *possibilities of form and colour.*

Episode I. The Hero. He is a man of middle age—has seen many sorrows—has travelled far—knows enough to be humiliated by his lack of knowledge, and is a decided transcendentalist. By profession he is a gifted musician and composer. He has lived a life of considerable hardship, but at the time the story opens he is able to enjoy a fair amount of comfort with a touch of luxury. He is famous in a way,—has written many beautiful orchestral pieces, songs and sonatas—but he is not satisfied. Something—*the* thing which is actually great, escapes him! It is a strange and transcendental 'something,' which he finds is lacking too in the works of many other composers. His tone of mind at the time, is after the spirit of the enthusiast who exclaims—"O Music!—vague and delicious "message from other worlds—echo of voices unknown that are sweeter "than our sweetest—what would'st thou have of me? In what way wilt "thou melt my very being into one rapt utterance of such rich harmony that all "the world may pause, and resting from its weary wickedness awhile, stop to "listen and to pray!"

Here the author may 'meander' to his heart's content on music and its most delicate suggestions. Everyone could not be allowed to meander, but Clifford Harrison may—*and* must!

Episode I. continuing must now throw out the end of the chain that is to catch and hold Episode II.

'Meandering' allowed here!

And thus::—

The story proceeds to show that the composer, on account of thoughts which are not as the world's thoughts, and certain habits of repose and solitude which fashion understands not, has very few friends. To most people he appears as a recluse. Courteous to women, he avoids them, more from vague distrust than actual dislike. Among his most welcome intimates however is a man who is his direct opposite—materialistic to the backbone—in looks, a sort of (shall we say) "Dolgourouki masculinity"?—large, strong, muscular—; in mind, cynical, careless,

Firm opinions on arts here!

'here to-day and gone to-morrow' tone. He treats music and the arts generally as frivolous, demanding a perpetual 'cui bono?' of them all. He entertains however a sort of tolerant liking for the musician-hero;—while thinking him a fool, he admits the superiority of a spiritual force in him which *vexes*, more than commands. Rebelling against it, he is nevertheless swayed by it. The musician-hero on the other hand, feels a certain fascination for the heavy materialist. 'He represents one side of the world 'to me—not the side I myself most admire, still it is *a* 'side.' Occasionally they argue together with heat and mutual dissatisfaction on life and death,—occasionally too, are conscious of a mutual vague repulsion. Often the thought crosses them both "Is it that we are destined "to oppose each other in some vital contest?—or is it "merely because we are direct opposites that we are "moved by sheer curiosity to try and probe into each "other's souls?"

Much 'meandering' and discussion requested, required, and commanded!

EPISODE II. THE HEROINE.

Most writers would make a 'dully-sweet' person here, but C. H. will make a sylph of dreams and moonlight such as is never seen save by poets.

This important personage must glide in gracefully, uniting Episode I and II in an undulating 'curve of beauty' as she comes. Her appearance, her eyes, her smile—these must be left to the poet, but for the exigencies of the *Plot* it is necessary that her chiefest quality be *unconsciousness* of charm. She must be as a clear glass vessel which catches the light unconscious of its service. The light which she absorbs is to be used for the high transfiguration of life, hence she must be unaware of herself. Being thus unaware, she carries fascination and exerts influence. She comes into the lives of both men,—the transcendentalist and the materialist. The latter is rich—the former is poor. The latter falls desperately in love—I had almost said villainously in love!—with her,—the former never thinks of her at all, save with a passing vague pleasure, as one who sees a charming, sweet-scented flower. All three happen to be staying at the same country-house. It is an English country-house of 'ye olde' style "deep-bowered in happy lawns"—etc. Musician-hero asked to play. As he sits at the piano in presence of the heroine a wonderful 'motif' comes to him, like a tune fallen out of Heaven, and he improvises an exquisite symphony, which however breaks off inadequately. Days go on—he tries to complete it, but cannot. And yet he knows that what he has managed to retain of it is the 'Great' work he has been waiting to do. Broods upon it—dreams of it. Tells his trouble to the materialist who pooh-poohs the whole thing. Materialist meantime, unknown to his friend, is worrying heroine excessively by

Here C. H. will make him play like an angel of course.

EPISODE II.: continued.

OBSERVE that when love makes known its approach
No 'meandering' on less important life-matters
Can Possibly even to a poet,
Be Allowed on the scene of action
here, As the delicate and shadowy
interchange of fine and half-imperceptible
love—emotions in their first dim awakening
will take I assure you all your time!

stormy love-making. Heroine, with the usual provokingness of the feminine temperament, has quietly fallen in love with the musician-hero. Why? Probably because it does not seem probable that he will ever love *her.* Weary of materialist-man, Heroine strolls, one sunset afternoon, into the music-room—finds Hero there playing. She sits near him, wondering why he is so dense as not to see that he is loved as few men are loved. "Play me that beautiful music you played the other day"—she says. He begins,—and remembers that it was in her presence that the 'Great' idea came to him. He now goes on with growing hope that in her presence again, he will be able to finish it. In vain—the thought becomes lost among confused notes and chords—and a sudden frenzy seizes him. He looks at the delicate spiritual-appearing presence of her in whose society the music first came to him. The sun has sunk. Evening shadows are darkening in the music-room. Leaning towards her from the piano, he grasps her hand—fiercely and not with love, but simply for self's sake. "Give me the rest of that music!" he exclaims—"You have it—you must give it to me!" In her *unawareness* she is amazed and frightened—she withdraws her hand, for just as he has been always calm and courteous, so now he is carried beyond himself into an excess of longing for he knows not what. Enter suddenly the wealthy materialist,—and the mystery of their souls is drawn back—the occasion lost in silence.

EPISODE III

Being the recoil of Idealism from Materialism, in this—as to wit:—

'All women are alike' is the way such men go on. Please to meander!

Materialist man strong to the front. Proud of himself, assertive, conquering. Is determined to win *her* at all costs. "All women are alike," is his keynote. Sees that the heroine has what he calls a 'sentimental' *penchant* for the secluded and occasionally volcanic composer. Tells her that in marriage one does not want ideals so much as general *bien-aise*—and for a husband she merits a strong handsome fellow, *like himself of course!* Heroine unconvinced. Hankers towards unsatisfactory composer.

Sarcasm of a Heine kind might come in here?

Materialist has a gay, brilliant, cynical discourse on ideals generally and their sure and complete disappearance. Heroine decidedly obstinate—still believes in ideals—particularly the musician one—and says so. Musician overhears part of the discussion, and retires quickly, amazed and filled with entirely new thoughts. Heroine has expressed a liking for him, in words which to the musician (who is no fool) suggest—what? He dare not

This must be impressed deeply on the reader.

Meandering requested on soul-expansion generally !

consider—but it is ***now to be observed that he has forgotten the 'great' symphony.*** He has become an importance to himself, by the discovery that he is of importance to ***her.*** A new light in his eyes, a new brightness in his manner, imply that he is happier. His materialist friend sees this. Hero gives himself a certain kingly 'air' over materialist—even as Romeo who says 'My bosom's lord sits lightly in his throne.' Meanwhile heroine having repulsed materialist, is pining away under the impression that she loves a man who will never love ***her.***

EPISODE IV.

Which must work fervently up to the Climax !

Materialist to the front again. Tells Hero he loves Heroine and means to marry her. "*You !*" says hero. "*I !*" responds materialist. "Never!" says hero. "What—*you* can love!" sneers materialist. Interchange of mutual politenesses in perfectly courteous language. Outwardly they remain friends,—inwardly they are as raging Lions. "If *Soul* is anything *he* will win"—says Materialist. "If *Body* is anything *he* will win"—says Transcendentalist. ***Meanwhile the Symphony is forgotten.*** Chance brings them all together again in the same country-house, Materialist, Musician, Heroine—Heroine pining away as there is no chance of winning Musician, so she thinks. Again she meets him in the music-room,—again she asks him to play. He obeys, but with a troubled heart, all his thoughts being with her. How shall he tell her of his love? For now he knows he loves her more than fame, more than music, more than himself. His fingers wander into the famous 'symphony'—he comes to the usual break—when she approaches softly and, laying one hand on his shoulder says "Go on!" He turns and looks at her. "No, I cannot go on," he says—"I care nothing for the music—I love you, and only you. For you I live—I am nothing unless I live through you." Scene. When both the stormy souls are quieted by the speaking-out of their emotions, in a sudden joy, he again plays the 'symphony'—and lo! this time there is no break—the 'Great' work is complete! *She* has been kneeling beside him, listening, her head resting against the chair. With an exclamation of rapture he cries—

The End.

"This then is love! This is the Eternal Secret—the Mystery of Life,—the Perfect Chord!"

He turns to raise and clasp her in his arms. She is . . .

CLIMAX I. Dead!

CLIMAX II Perfectly happy with perfect lover and perfect love.

Observations.

Should Climax I. be determined upon it may be necessary to allow the Materialist to comment thereon (as below). Should Climax II. be preferred, comment is needless!

In the event of Climax I.

Materialist observes that—

"I always told my dear friend after the publication of his great work, and shortly before he was so rash as to die of grief for the loss of the charming person to whom he suddenly became so romantically attached, that ideals were altogether unattainable in this life. In another world—for those who believe in it—there may be a solution to the puzzle. Meanwhile, the 'Symphony' is perfect."

And the real nucleus of the whole slight idea, dear Poet, is this—that—Supposing God purposes to give humanity something valuable or lasting, either in art or science, He will use indifferently two or two thousand lives to accomplish His purpose. The 'symphony' was a gift to the world of music. It needed two *lives* to begin it, and two *loves* to perfect it. There is no reason that it should end sadly—the two lives thus fused into an immortal sweetness, could go on sharing happiness with one another. This you must decide. Whether to draw out the whole soul of the woman in a passion of love and imprison it in the Symphony—or to link that soul with her lover's and inspire him to more music still. This, Poet, is *your* Problem!

FINIS.

RED ROSE-BUDS

By J. J. BELL

ILLUSTRATED BY A. BAILEY.

HE saw her first in Bishopsgate, where he had been making a business call. He had just crossed the street, when a shout caused him to look back. From under, as it seemed, the bonnet of a bus sprang a girl and, with a little gasp, gained the pavement within a yard of him.

"Pretty close!" The words were on his tongue, but there was that about the girl—her bearing more, perhaps, than her expression—which checked their utterance.

The glimpse informed Richard Cole that she was fairly tall, dark, attractive, smartly dressed in smoke-blue with touches of pale grey—and then he was on his way again, turning into Threadneedle Street. Opposite the Bank he took a bus, and, mounting to the roof, had another glimpse of the girl running after it as it moved. He paused to see her spring on board and go inside. Seemingly, said a fleeting thought, she was fond of cutting it fine!

It was a warm afternoon in early autumn. But for certain urgent legal business Richard Cole, a young man with an inherited fortune and a passion for editing popular magazines, would not have been in town. Worse luck, the legal business was not completed, and he was now debating whether to spend the night at his club or at his dust-sheeted flat in Kensington. Before that question could be settled, however, another thought

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sprang into being, reminding him of a wedding invitation received that morning. He might as well see about his gift now—and as the bus stopped at the top of Ludgate Hill he bolted downstairs. Getting off, he caught a glimmer of a smoke-blue skirt and pretty ankles in pale grey.

To escape being held up he had to cross the street without delay, but a nudge, as it were, from curiosity made him look back. And there was the girl, darting under the noses of a pair of dray-horses! Reaching the pavement, she was lost in the throng, and, with a smile for her temerity, Richard walked down towards the Circus. The problem of choosing a wedding present was never Richard's. A carriage clock every time. Wherefore it was not long till he was again on Ludgate Hill, still going down. He had thought of walking to the Strand, but at the Circus he decided to take a taxi from the rank there to his club, have a cup of tea, and make up his mind as to putting in the evening.

Giving the man the direction, he got into the cab, settled himself, lit a cigarette—and suddenly smiled. Was that smoke-blue girl still trying to get run over? Absurd, of course, to imagine he would ever see her again, he reflected, taking a lazy survey of his surroundings. And then, as the cab started, he let out a soft exclamation. The girl was getting into the taxi just behind him! He ought, as he told himself presently, to have taken note of the driver, for once in the torrent of Fleet Street, it was impossible to identify her cab.

"Well, I suppose that's the last of her," he thought, just a little regretfully. "If it had been the other way about, she would have been justified in fancying I was following her!"

Mounting to the roof, he had another glimpse of the girl running after the bus as it moved.

Nevertheless, getting down at his club, in the Adelphi, he glanced back along the terrace. "Gone for good!" he murmured, without considering the fact that science has not yet provided humanity with a means of seeing round corners.

In the doorway he stopped short. Ass, not to have remembered that the club would be in the hands of tradesmen, undergoing its annual overhaul! Disinclined to go on to the club that was giving temporary hospitality to his fellow-members, he determined to make for Kensington, look out some documents required for the next day, and——

He was sitting in the Underground, and the smoke-blue girl was within five yards of him! She had entered the train just in front of him; she had not once, to his awareness, glanced in his direction; he had seen her only in profile—and a charming profile it was, all sweetness and pride. And

yet, however reluctantly, he was being persuaded that this very ladylike girl was following him, watching him. So compelling was the feeling that he determined to put it to the test; and when the train stopped at Victoria he got up and made for the door. The girl rose also. Near the door was a vacant place, and Richard took it. The girl resumed her seat.

SHE *was* following him! Why? Why on earth? Richard had heard of female detectives, but he had nothing on his conscience big enough to encourage the theory of espionage. Besides, the girl, apart from being much too attractive and fine-looking, was hopelessly inefficient! She was the sort of "shadow" that made itself felt. Once more Richard looked at her. Save in a certain stiffness of attitude she evinced no sign of self-consciousness. It was an odd situation for a young man—much too odd to evoke the more pleasing sensations. Richard, chivalrous by nature, was embarrassed, uneasy, anything but flattered.

And then it dawned upon him! She had mistaken him for another person! He had a double somewhere. Well, that simplified everything. Let her follow him to his address, and she would surely discover her error. Richard, lighting a cigarette, smiled with relief behind his hand. What an idiot he had been! The smile passed. Confound it!—he would be sorry, too, to lose his "shadow"!

At Kensington High Street he left the train, so sure of her following that not until he had gone fifty yards along the street did he glance back. There she was! And now the thought of her long wild-goose chase—he being the goose, of course!—filled him with compunction. Yet what could he have done; what could he do? There was always the tiny chance that he had been wrong in his conclusion, that their journey together was one of coincidence; and Richard was too sensitive a fellow to risk a snub from a girl, especially a girl with a face so proud and sweet.

Well, it was all over now. Here were the Mansions; here was his entrance. Without turning his head he mounted the steps and went in—and immediately cursed his admirable self-restraint. One last glance would have done nobody any harm, and he would never see her again. In the vestibule he paused for a moment, then entered the lift and put his finger on the button, which being pressed would work the daily miracle of sending him to the top floor.

And out of the sunlight, straight to the lift, came the smoke-blue girl. So taken aback was Richard that, without a word, he opened the door and let her in.

"Top floor, please," she murmured, and, had Richard been less upset, he must have noted that her delicious colouring became a thought more so.

He did not look at her as the lift sped upwards, but as he let her out he ventured a glance, raising his hat.

"Thank you," she said, softly, and stood aside on the landing.

Richard, scarce knowing what he did, sent the lift down and stepped to his door.

She followed.

With more colour than he had brought from the moors, Richard again removed his hat and said, very courteously:—

"Perhaps I ought to tell you that my name is Richard Cole."

"Yes," she answered, simply. "I have a message for you, Mr. Cole—to be delivered in private."

"Oh!" exclaimed Richard. "Why, certainly," he added, and fitted his Yale as though the hour had been four a.m. instead of five p.m. "Please come into the sitting-room," he stammered in the hall. "I'm afraid it must be awfully dusty and stuffy. I've been away for nearly a month."

"Would you mind shutting the door?" she said—and it came upon him that she was nervous.

Kicking aside an accumulation of papers, he closed it, and led her to the sitting-room. There he removed the dust-sheet from an easy-chair and was about to draw up one of the green blinds, when——

"Please, don't! You'll understand presently. Besides, the light is quite good." She gave a small faint laugh, and said: "Mr. Cole, it was foolish, but I was hoping you might recognize me. Of course, you don't."

Now he was looking at her openly and eagerly. "Why," he cried, "you do seem to remind me of someone I know."

"We have met before, Mr. Cole."

"I'm sorry. Wait! No! you remind me of a man—— Please forgive and tell me."

"I'll forgive because it was really a long time ago, also because I should hardly have recognized you. Do you happen to remember a garden in Surrey, Mr. Cole?"

"Ah!" It was illumination for Richard. "You are Muriel Windermere!"

"No!"

"Then Monica!—the little girl who——"

"Who listened to the big boy telling fairy-tales——"

"And sat so close at the horrid bits! Of course I remember, especially the way she snuggled——"

"I remember only the fact of your telling horrid fairy-tales," she said, suddenly dignified. But next moment she smiled. "So perhaps that may serve for a reintroduction, Mr. Cole——"

"And we may shake hands, Monica—Miss Windermere."

"That seems reasonable, though you may regret it when I have delivered the message." She was all gravity now.

"But this is the strangest thing!" Richard exclaimed. "I had not heard from my old chum, your brother Tom, for years—I knew he was in Egypt, making discoveries—but on going to my lawyers in Bishopsgate this afternoon I learned that he was home and had rung them up this very morning, wanting to get in touch with me. Indeed, my lawyers seemed to expect that he would turn up at their office at the hour of my appointment there——"

"Forgive my interrupting you, but my message is from Tom, and I shall explain why he did not turn up."

"Please let me have the message, and please take this chair," said Richard. "I believe I could give you a cup of tea, if you don't mind it without milk. It's rotten that my housekeeper should be on holiday, too——"

She held up her hand. It was a gesture of appeal.

"I'm a fool," he said, contritely. "I ought to have seen that the message was urgent—but nothing very serious, I hope?"

"I'm afraid it's pretty serious for Tom—he admits it is. But here"—she brought a small black object from her breast—"here is the thing I was to give you from him—when no one could see me doing so. That's why"—a very faint smile—"I have been hunting you all the afternoon, Mr. Cole."

She placed it in his hand—a little oval of ebony, about three inches long and an inch and a half in depth, and very smooth. To Richard it suggested something exceedingly old, polished by passage through innumerable hands. At first he took it to be solid. Then he saw that it was a sort of casket exquisitely fitted.

"Open it," said Monica.

With a slight effort he removed the top. A thin fragrance, not altogether pleasing, rose to his nostrils. But for the moment his perception was all in his eyes.

"Good Lord!" he said.

Fitting into a bed within a narrow margin of ebony lay a great oval green crystal bearing strange carvings. Even in the half light its beauty was startling to Richard.

"Something that Tom dug up in Egypt—something with a history," he remarked.

"Tom bought it in Egypt, and I have no doubt that it has a history. But I think you should sit down, Mr. Cole. The message and explanations may last a little while."

Without removing the sheet he took the nearest chair.

"Smoke, if you wish," she said, and shook her head at the proffered case. "Tom bought it from a man in Luxor one afternoon, a few days before we left for home. I believe he paid a big price, bigger than he could afford; but Tom was always rather reckless, as well as rather obstinate, when

"Open it," said Monica.

he desired a thing. I daresay you have noticed that in the past ? "

Richard, smiling into the dark inquiring eyes, allowed that he had noticed such characteristics of his friend.

" Then you will not be altogether astonished at some of the things I have to tell you. But—to return to Luxor—Tom was naturally curious to learn all he could about the emerald, and the man said that if Tom came back the next day he might be able to tell him something. When Tom went back the next day, the only thing he learned was that the man was dead—had been murdered in the night."

" I say ! "

" I must confess," said the girl, " that Tom was more annoyed than shocked. He has not spent all those years in Egypt without acquiring at least a nodding acquaintance with murder. But he was more than annoyed when, on the same day, a stranger—Tom could not be certain of his nationality—offered him double what he had paid for the emerald. For Tom, you see, believed that his purchase had been secret. Well, he refused the offer, and the stranger went away, looking far from benevolent. The same night Tom's room was ransacked, so he decided to leave Luxor at once. I should tell you that he never mentioned the emerald to me till we got home to this country. In fact, I feel that he would not have mentioned it at all, had he not needed my help pretty badly."

Richard sat up. " You mean that someone is trying to get the emerald from him ? "

She nodded. " And without asking or paying for it."

" Of course, it must be of great value, Miss Windermere."

" I suppose it is ; but I fear the people who want it are not much concerned about its intrinsic value. Tom believes that emerald to be the symbol, perhaps also the seal, of some ancient secret society—and, unfortunately, as we are forced to believe, the society still exists."

" Good Lord ! As an editor I have read stories of such things, but I scarcely imagined there was anything real behind them."

" There is nothing too strange to happen in Egypt, Mr. Cole."

" But you and Tom are in England ! "

" Egypt," she said, slowly, " has come to England." She gave a weary little sigh.

" Are you telling me," cried Richard, now all alert, " that old Tom is in a tight place ? "

" I'm afraid he is, and I hate to admit that it is of his own making. He does not deny that in all probability the emerald was stolen, or received from a thief, by the seller ; but he absolutely refuses to give it up on any consideration whatever."

" And you say he ought to give it up ? "

" Don't you ? "

" Well, if the theft could be proved, I suppose the law——"

" I hardly think the law will be consulted. Tom, of course, won't ask its opinion, and I should question whether the people after the emerald recognize its existence. Apparently, as I said, they intend neither to ask nor to pay."

" What are the people like ? How many are there ? "

" We—we don't know."

" Don't know what they're like ? "

" No. It seems absurd, but I'll explain presently. Meantime——"

" But, Miss Windermere, where is Tom now ? "

" I wish I knew. When I left him he was going to try once more to throw those people off the scent. We have changed our hotel four times since we arrived here a fortnight ago. I hope I shall find him safe at the Planet this evening. We are—or were—at the Essex. We always pack up our things before we go out. Rather a distracting life, Mr. Cole." The smile was plainly an effort, and it passed with a sigh.

" This is horrible," said Richard, indignant and sympathetic. " But you have just told me that Tom is trying to mislead those people, yet he does not know what they are like. How—— ? "

" LET me go on with my story," she said. " This morning it was plain to me that Tom was, to put it mildly, uneasy. We have a private sitting-room—not because we can afford it—and when I came down to breakfast there, I found the door locked. Tom opened it, and I saw the emerald in his hand. He had evidently been gloating over it—I cannot truthfully use another word—as he does all the evening, and sometimes half the night. But, somehow, I hated it more in the morning. I greatly fear that the thing has an unhealthy fascination for Tom. It never leaves his person. I have begged him repeatedly to take it to his bank and leave it there. But even that——"

" It would mean security."

" Yes ; for the emerald. But to come back to this morning. I asked him why he had not sought some of his old friends for their advice, if not their help. He said he had sought several, and all were out of town. He would have sought you, but could not find your address. He has been a neglectful fellow, and I'm afraid he thought his old friends might not be too sympathetic.

However, I asked him if he could not remember the names of any people who might know where you were to be found. And then he remembered your lawyers in Bishopsgate."

"So that's how he came to ring up?"

"It was really I who rang up, but Tom did intend to see you there, and, as I could not think to let him go out alone, I was going to take the liberty of calling along with him."

"And something prevented it?"

"Not in the beginning." For a moment she was silent. "Now, as you know, Mr. Cole," she went on, "to get to your lawyers from Bishopsgate, you go through a passage into a courtyard, and then into a short entry on the left. It is a fairly busy place. Well, we actually got as far as the courtyard, and were looking round for your lawyers' name on a window, or wherever it might be. And then, right at Tom's feet, fell a red rose-bud——"

"What on earth——?"

"It might have been thrown by any one of the dozen people passing by, or, as I fancied, by someone in the passage we had just come through. Tom looked down at it, and I saw him turn white, whiter than at the sight of any of the previous rose-buds——"

"BUT this beats me!" began Richard.

"The first rose-bud Tom found one night on his dressing-table at the hotel; the second came in a queerly scrawled envelope; the third fell at his feet when he was coming out of the bank; the fourth was tucked under the string of a small parcel I had brought to the hotel from a shop in the Strand; the fifth came to him on a coffee tray in the lounge, and it was evident that the waiter was puzzled; and this, in the courtyard, was the sixth."

"Extraordinary! But what connection——?"

"The rose-buds have not their natural scent, Mr. Cole. They smell like that ebony box, only much more strongly. The first breath is sweet, the rest abominable. But the perfume soon dies away, especially in the open."

"Uncanny," muttered Richard, sniffing at the box, "and—yes—it is abominable! And you take those rose-buds to be warnings, Miss Windermere?"

"Threats—no, not exactly threats. I should call them nerve-breakers." She shivered. "You see what I mean—what those creatures are aiming at?"

"I'm afraid I do. You mean that they will go on presenting Tom, in the most unlikely places, at the most unlikely times, with those beastly rose-buds till——"

"Till Tom's nerve gives—till it breaks—till at the fall of a rose-bud Tom allows them to strike, or simply holds out that ebony box for them to take. Only, Tom will be a wreck before that happens. He loves that horrid emerald!"

"It's an ugly business! I know what would happen to my nerves were I in Tom's place. There's something so devilishly mocking about the method. Rose-buds, of all things! Still, there must be a way out," said Richard, attempting a cheerful tone. "At any rate, Tom has not got the emerald now!"

"That can make very little difference, so long as they believe he has it. And neither Tom nor I would wish them to think it was in your possession. I'm sure he was panic-stricken when he slipped it to me and bade me wait for your coming from the lawyers', follow you, and give it you secretly. But he will ask it back in the morning, and I'm wondering how he will pass the night without it."

"Is it—is he so fascinated?"

"Mr. Cole," she replied, "don't look at it too often."

"H'm!" muttered Richard, and put on the lid.

"Don't handle it too much."

"I'll put it in my safe."

"Yes, that will be best. You are very good," she proceeded, softly. "You have accepted the unpleasant trust without being asked."

"Tom is an old friend—and so are you, if I may say so."

"A little girl of nine and a big boy of fifteen—was it?"

"About that, Miss Monica."

"Discussing fairy-tales in a Surrey garden," she continued, dreamily, apparently without noticing his use of her name. "Well, your most horrid fairy-tales, Mr. Cole, were lovely compared with this true one."

"I'm afraid I can't recollect the fairy-tales, but I do remember that I wasn't 'Mr. Cole' then."

"'M!" said Monica, thoughtfully. "It is a long time ago. Tom, of course, calls you 'Richard.'"

"I wasn't 'Richard' in the Surrey garden."

Monica glanced at her watch. "I must go to the Planet Hotel now. I hope I may find Tom there," she said, rising. "Where are you staying to-night?"

"Here. May I look in at the Planet later, and see Tom?"

"The last thing you must do!" she cried. "Forgive me! I'm sorry I dare not invite you to come; but, you see, those people must not be given a chance of suspecting anything between you and Tom."

"You are perfectly right," he admitted, regretfully. "But won't you risk a cup of my tea before you go?"

"Thanks, but—well, I'm anxious."

"I understand. Will you have a cab, or shall I see you to Kensington High Street?"

"Neither. I'll slip out alone." She pointed to the window. "One can never tell with those people. That is why I asked you to leave the blind down. Before I came into the building I noticed that not a blind was up."

"I see what you mean. Yes, I suppose we are the only persons at present in the whole block. Well, I sha'n't raise a blind to-night."

"That is wise. Better all the houses suspect than one proclaimed." She held out her hand. "Mr. Cole, Tom and I shall never be able to thank you."

Protesting that he was at her service—and, of course, Tom's—he conducted her to the door, and then the lift, which he brought up for her.

"Tom will 'phone you, I expect, about the emerald," she said.

"I'll try to think of a way out." Colouring, he added, awkwardly: "If some money would tempt them . . . I've really more than I need——"

"No, no; never that!"

"Tom is an old friend."

"He has a real one in you. Good-bye."

When she was gone he stood still for a space, cursing Tom for bringing his sister into it, and wondering when he should see her again. Then he took a glance at the emerald, muttered "Damn you!" and carried the ebony box to the wall-safe in the dining-room.

SCARCELY had he locked it up when there came a tiny ring. He strode into the hall—and hesitated.

"Please," said a faint voice.

He opened and Monica came in, panting.

"Shut—bolt it! And give me back the emerald!" she whispered, before he could speak. "You must not bear the risk of keeping it."

"What has happened?" he asked, wondering, for, despite her terror, she was flushed.

"I ran up all the stairs," she answered, as though reading his thoughts.

"But what has happened, Miss—Monica?"

"Nothing—nothing. I—I've only changed my mind." She turned from him, downcast.

Taking her arm, he said, gently: "Something *has* happened. Tell me. No! Come in and sit down first. I'll get you a glass of——"

"Please, no. I'll sit down for a minute." She submitted to his leading her into the sitting-room.

"The emerald is in the safe," he told her when she was seated. "Now tell me what happened downstairs. Did you see someone?"

"I suppose I must answer; but it would be better if you gave it me back and let me take my chance," she said and sighed. "Well, when the lift stopped, I saw no one, but I felt that horrid perfume and was conscious of being watched. I was as bad as poor Tom in my panic, but I had enough wits left not to give your floor away by using the lift. I climbed the stairs as quickly and as quietly as I could, and—and I don't think anybody came after me. But—*what's that?*" She became rigid, listening.

"I heard nothing."

"'Sh!—in the hall—the door!"

He smiled. "Another optimist's advertisement, perhaps. But I assure you I heard nothing."

She was already stealing across the floor. He followed, and looked over her shoulder into the hall. A little sob of dismay escaped her.

On the polished boards, under the letter-slit, lay a red rose-bud.

Richard drew in his breath. If at any moment of her story he had suspected Monica, as well as her brother, of overstrained nerves and a fevered imagination, he would have apologized now. The thing was come near to himself, and for a score of pulse-beats the disgust of it held him. Then he pulled himself up and, disregarding the cry of the girl, dashed into the hall, slipped back the bolt, and tore open the door.

No one there! Not a sound from below! Never a quiver of the lift's cables.

He closed the door, and with a sense of repulsion picked up the rose-bud, its stem wrapped round with thin paper. He sniffed, stared, and brought it close to his face.

"I say!" he exclaimed; "the scent is quite ordinary!"

The girl was beside him.

"Quick, let me have it, Mr. Cole. So it is! I wonder if there's a meaning in that? But—*what's this?* None of the other buds had paper on them. Writing!"

Her fingers shook as they unwound the paper. Dropping the bud, she unfolded the flimsy stuff. "A message!" Next moment she cried out in distress.

"Read it," she said, faintly, and he read the sprawling words:—

"We hav yor broder. We sel his life and gren ston for 2,000£. Lady must

bring mony. Give to man with rose. Soon. To-day. Lady must go alon."

Underneath was a rude drawing of the carving on the emerald.

"It usually is," he said, dryly. "But in this case it simplifies the situation. At this hour it is impossible to lay hands on two thousand pounds in notes, but I will give you an open cheque, and you, or those scoundrels, can cash it at the bank first thing in the morning. I shall instruct the bank to pay it without asking questions."

"Mr. Cole," she cried, "you must know that I could never accept such a favour from you! I—I don't know that Tom has so much money in all the world."

"You have no choice," he replied. "Tom must be saved. And it's my good fortune to be able to serve you—and Tom."

She drooped and was silent.

He opened the door and Monica came in, panting.
"Shut—bolt it! And give me back the emerald!" she whispered.

"So it is money, after all," remarked Richard. "Come back to the sitting-room and we'll talk it over."

She did not speak till she was seated, and then she said, drearily: "I never thought it would be money."

He uncovered a bureau, wrote out a cheque and folded it.

"Come, Miss Monica; take it."

She allowed him to slip it into her hand. Her head sank lower. "I have no words," she whispered.

"I'm glad of that. Well, let's get it over. We have got to trust those beggars—again no choice!—but I shall follow you."

"You must not follow me!" Her voice was stronger. "I must go quite alone."

"I can't let you do that."

"Then I give you back the cheque." She held it out. "They must know you by this time. You could not follow without being detected. There is no danger for me. I may take your money; but not even for Tom's sake will I have you in danger of your life."

In the end she won her point. Unwillingly he saw her into the lift.

"You will ring me up, Miss Monica?"

"At ten o'clock. I had better not promise for earlier." She held out her hand. "Good-bye. Thanks seem vain." She looked once into his eyes, laid her finger on the button, and was gone.

He returned to the house, shut the door, and picked up the rose-bud upon which she had trodden—deliberately—on her way out. Perhaps because of that he placed it in his letter-case.

A long time till ten o'clock! He could not bring himself to go out. There was always the chance of her returning. Search in the pantry rewarded him with a tin of tongue and another of biscuits. He dined. Afterwards he smoked, tried to read, and gave his watch next to no rest.

AT ten to the minute came the ring. He was already at the telephone. Her voice was hurried but clear:—

"I have time to say only one thing: Tom is safe. Good night."

It was far from satisfying, but Richard was sustained by the "good night," while he looked forward to further news at his lawyers' in the morning. Indeed, he was pretty certain that Tom would turn up there. Still, he was, as might have been expected, in a condition of mental unrest which, along with the sultry heat, made the night long and unrefreshing.

He awoke rather late, 'phoned the bank concerning the cheque, and, taking the emerald with him, went up to town for breakfast. During the meal he glanced idly through a newspaper until his eye was caught by—

"NEW DISCOVERIES NEAR ASSOUAN."

"This will be in old Tom's line," he reflected. And he was right! It was very much in old Tom's line! In fact, it was an account of how, only the previous day, Dr. Thomas Windermere, the young but already distinguished Egyptologist, had laid bare a tomb which was almost certain to prove——

Staring at the paper, Richard felt himself turning white. A minute later he was in the street, hastening to the shop of a jeweller whom he knew.

"Glass," said the jeweller. "Finely done, and modelled, no doubt, from some veritable antique—but glass. The box, I should say, is very old."

"May I use your 'phone?" said Richard, who had more than half-expected the jeweller's dismal verdict. There was just a chance now of his being in time to stop payment of the cheque. He was not quite so affluent that two thousand pounds did not matter.

But, with fingers on the receiver, he paused. Monica Windermere—that dear little girl in the Surrey garden, snuggling close as he told the most fearsome tales in his repertory! Monica Windermere—that lovely girl who had followed him yesterday! Well—a dry smile came and went—she had certainly paid him back in the matter of fairy-tales! His fingers tightened their grip.

Still the receiver remained on the hook. Monica Windermere, with that sweet, proud face of hers—what an actress!—yet how badly must she have needed the money before she planned to swindle her brother's old friend! Somehow he could neither detest nor despise the girl. He was too hurt, too sorry for that. And suddenly—"Let her have the money!" he thought, and turned from the instrument.

Stay! What if, after all, she were not Monica Windermere? Her scheme altogether was so neatly constructed that there would be nothing inconceivable in her adding to it such a trifling deception as the use of another's name. The possible capture of two thousand pounds was surely worth a little extra research into his life history. But even if she were not Monica Windermere, he was still hurt and sorry. Came a vision of that sweet, proud face when the bank cashier, coldly suspicious, declined payment. Hang it! he couldn't do it!—and, drawing himself up, he strode out of the jeweller's shop and took bus to Bishopsgate.

He was before his time. A clerk showed him into the waiting-room, and brought a letter which had arrived with the first post.

Richard stared—he was expecting no letters—and tore it open.

His cheque for two thousand pounds! A

slip of paper—"With Monica Windermere's sincere thanks."

"I give it up!" said Richard—which was, of course, the last thing he was going to do.

"Devil take this legal business!" he shouted at his astounded lawyer. "Fix it up as you think best. I'm off!"

"Planet Hotel!" he ordered the taxi-driver. It was just possible—— But the Planet harboured no Miss Windermere. Nor had the Essex done so within the past month.

He had noted the postmark on Monica's envelope—"W.1"—and he spent fruitless hours in driving round the West-end hotels—why, he could hardly have told, except that he had to begin somewhere the search for Monica. Late in the afternoon he went down to the Surrey village. The Windermeres had removed years ago, but perhaps—— No; no one could give him the desired information. On the return journey he suddenly called himself the ass of all the asses ever born into an asinine world! Cable to Tom! Why had he not thought of it at the outset?

"Devil take this legal business!" he shouted at his astounded lawyer. "Fix it up as you think best. I'm off!"

So he cabled to Tom—knowing that he might have to wait days for a reply, if Tom were still mucking about that old tomb—"Send Monica's address, urgent."

On the morrow he was due to return to his friends on the moors, but the moors, at least, had lost their charm. He sent a telegram, and betook himself to his editorial office.

His assistant was, not unnaturally, surprised by his chief's appearance five days before the appointed date.

"Fed up with holidays, Johnston," said Richard. "Take the few days, if you like. And give me some stories to read."

Johnston brought a pile of typescript.

"The top one came in only this morning, but I've glanced through it, because it's marked 'Urgent'—I can't imagine why. It's from that lady—Nora Ashley—whom you've been rejecting for the last two or three years."

"I know. Quite good stories, but unconvincing. Any improvement in this one?"

"I shouldn't wonder if you liked it, Mr. Cole. Nothing very new in idea, but it works up, and the finish is——"

"I'll have a look at it. Yes, I meant it, Johnston. You are welcome to my remaining holidays."

Richard began with Miss Nora Ashley's letter. As a rule he resented letters sent with offerings, but he had always been interested in this lady's work, though he had felt bound to reject it.

The letter, dated from Hampstead, ran:—

"*Dear Sir,*

"*For nearly three years I have been sending you stories which you have invariably returned, often with a kindly note telling me that you had found my story not without merit, but unconvincing. Now I send you one more, which shall be the last,*

should your verdict still be the same. With many thanks,

" Very truly yours,

" NORA ASHLEY."

Laying the letter aside, Richard took up the typescript, turned the blank outside page, and—nearly sprang from his chair.

" RED ROSE-BUDS."

BY NORA ASHLEY.

Twenty minutes later he laid down the typescript and wiped his brow. No wonder ! The story he had just read was an almost exact relation of the happenings of the previous afternoon. The persons had unfamiliar names, and it ended with the " hero's " discovery that he had been swindled.

Richard rang the bell on his desk and his assistant appeared.

" Johnston, I'm most awfully sorry, but would you mind not going off to-day ? "

" I hadn't thought of going till to-morrow, Mr. Cole."

" Good man ! Well, I don't know whether I shall be in again to-day. Thanks for calling my attention to that story."

" Are you going to take it ? "

" Ending's rotten, don't you think ? "

" Why, I thought the ending made the story."

" Oh, well——" said Richard, and bolted for the Hampstead Tube.

" BUT you are really Monica ? "

" I am really Monica—and I fear you think me a most immodest person, though I felt simply awful doing the things I did yesterday. But you had kept on rejecting my stories till——"

" I understand—and it was bravely and splendidly done."

" And my story was convincing, Mr. Cole ? "

" Your acting was—I could hardly deny that, could I ? "

" But that was the story ! "

" Very well ! Your story is convincing."

" And you accept it ? "

" I accept it on the understanding that you will change the ending."

" The ending ! " she cried in dismay.

" My readers don't like a romance that ends in a ' big sell.' "

" But it isn't a romance ! "

" It is the most romantic thing that I've ever—h'm—read about ! "

" Oh, dear ! " sighed Monica, presently. " What am I to do ? "

" We have known each other since we were children," said Richard. " Let me take you to lunch—and we can discuss the whole matter."

Monica declared lunch to be out of the question—and went away—and came back in smoke-blue and pale grey.

" I've only one question," said Richard, in the taxi. " How did you know I was to be at my lawyers' ? "

" That's quite simple," she replied. " The senior partner's son plays tennis. He also writes stories when, I suppose, he ought to be writing nonsense on parchment. And you consistently reject his stories, as you do mine. We often tell each other how bitterly we hate you. And so——"

" What name does he write under ? "

" I sha'n't tell you," said Monica, adding, for no reason that one can see, " He's engaged to a great friend of mine."

" Ah," said Richard, genially, " tell him to come and see me."

They lunched at a most expensive place.

" About my story," said Monica, over the coffee ; " would you care to tell me how you would like it to end ? "

" Seeing that the story began," said Richard, eyeing the ash of his cigarette, " in a Surrey garden——"

" But it didn't ! It began in Bishopsgate."

" But for the Surrey garden it couldn't have begun at all."

" Oh, well, in a sense that is so."

There was a short silence till he said, softly :—

" May I call you ' Monica ' ? "

" I think you have already done so. What has that to do with the ending of my story ? " she asked, toying with her spoon.

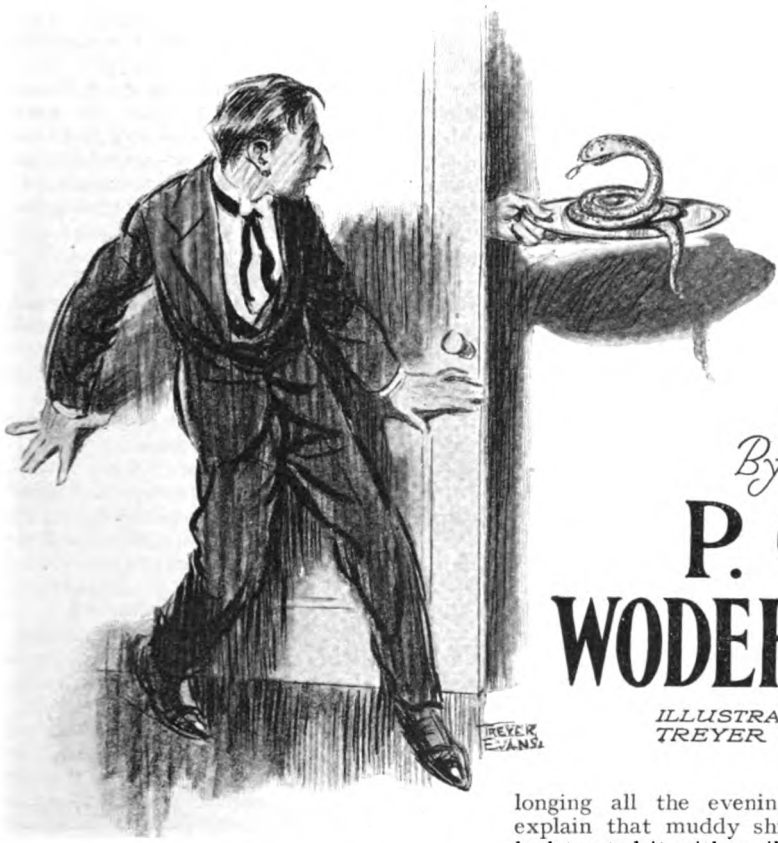
For a moment or two he watched her, then said, smilingly yet gravely :—

" Even an editor, Monica, may feel diffident in the presence of an author. At the moment I cannot venture to suggest an ending, but I feel that I shall do so before very long."

From his letter-case he brought the crushed rose-bud, holding it tenderly.

" Oh ! " said Monica, and had the grace to blush.

Something Squishy



By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY TREYER EVANS

IN the demeanour of Roland Moresby Attwater, that rising young essayist and literary critic, there appeared, as he stood holding the door open to allow the ladies to leave his uncle Joseph's dining-room, no outward and visible sign of the irritation that seethed beneath his mud-stained shirt-front. Well-bred and highly civilized, he knew how to wear the mask. The lofty forehead that shone above his rimless pince-nez was smooth and unruffled, and if he bared his teeth it was only in a polite smile. Nevertheless, Roland Attwater was fed to the eyebrows.

In the first place, he hated these family dinners. In the second place, he had been longing all the evening for a chance to explain that muddy shirt, and everybody had treated it with a silent tact which was simply maddening. In the third place, he knew that his uncle Joseph was only waiting for the women to go to bring up once again the infuriating topic of Lucy.

After a preliminary fluttering, not unlike that of hens disturbed in a barnyard, the female members of the party rustled past him in single file—his aunt Emily; his aunt Emily's friend, Mrs. Hughes-Higham; his aunt Emily's companion and secretary, Miss Partlett; and his aunt Emily's adopted daughter, Lucy. The last-named brought up the rear of the procession. She was a gentle-looking girl with spaniel eyes and freckles, and as she passed she gave Roland a swift, shy glance of admiration and gratitude. It was the sort of look

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Ariadne might have given Theseus immediately after his turn-up with the Minotaur: and a casual observer, not knowing the facts, would have supposed that, instead of merely opening a door for her, Roland had rescued her at considerable bodily risk from some frightful doom.

Roland closed the door and returned to the table. His uncle, having pushed port towards him, coughed significantly and opened fire.

"How did you think Lucy was looking to-night, Roland?"

The young man winced, but the fine courtly spirit which is such a characteristic of the younger members of the intelligentsia did not fail him. Instead of banging the speaker over the head with the decanter, he replied with quiet civility.

"Splendid," he said.

"Nice girl."

"Very."

"Wonderful disposition."

"Quite."

"And so sensible."

"Precisely."

"Very different from these shingled, cigarette-smoking young women who infest the place nowadays."

"Decidedly."

"Had one of 'em up before me this morning," said Uncle Joseph, frowning austerely over his port. Sir Joseph Moresby was by profession a metropolitan magistrate. "Charged with speeding. That's their idea of life."

"Girls," argued Roland, "will be girls."

"Not while I'm sitting at Bosher Street police-court, they won't," said his uncle, with decision. "Unless they want to pay five-pound fines and have their licences endorsed." He sipped thoughtfully. "Look here, Roland," he said, as one struck by a novel idea, "why the devil don't you marry Lucy?"

"Well, uncle——"

"You've got a bit of money, she's got a bit of money. Ideal. Besides, you want somebody to look after you."

"Do you suggest," inquired Roland, his eyebrows rising coldly, "that I am incapable of looking after myself?"

"Yes, I do. Why, dammit, you can't even dress for dinner, apparently, without getting mud all over your shirt-front."

Roland's cue had been long in coming, but it had arrived at a very acceptable moment.

"If you really want to know how that mud came to be on my shirt-front, Uncle Joseph," he said, with quiet dignity, "I got it saving a man's life."

"Eh? What? How?"

"A man slipped on the pavement as I was passing through Grosvenor Square on my way here. It was raining, you know. And I——"

"You walked here?"

"Yes. And just as I reached the corner of Duke Street——"

"Walked here in the rain? There you are! Lucy would never let you do a foolish thing like that."

"It began to rain after I had started."

"Lucy would never have let you start."

"Are you interested in my story, uncle," said Roland, stiffly, "or shall we go upstairs?"

"Eh? My dear boy, of course, of course. Most interested. Want to hear the whole thing from beginning to end. You say it was raining and this fellow slipped off the pavement. And then I suppose a car or a taxi or something came along suddenly and you pulled him out of danger. Yes, go on, my boy."

"How do you mean, go on?" said Roland, morosely. He felt like a public speaker whose chairman has appropriated the cream of his speech and inserted it in his own introductory remarks. "That's all there is."

"Well, who was the man? Did he ask you for your name and address?"

"He did."

"Good! A young fellow once did something very similar to what you did, and the man turned out to be a millionaire and left him his entire fortune. I remember reading about it."

"In the *Family Herald*, no doubt?"

"Did your man look like a millionaire?"

"He did not. He looked like what he actually was—the proprietor of a small bird-and-snake shop in Seven Dials."

"Oh!" said Sir Joseph, a trifle dashed. "Well, I must tell Lucy about this," he said, brightening. "She will be tremendously excited. Just the sort of thing to appeal to a warm-hearted girl like her. Look here, Roland, why don't you marry Lucy?"

Roland came to a swift decision. It had not been his intention to lay bare his secret dreams to this pertinacious old blighter, but there seemed no other way of stopping him. He drained a glass of port and spoke crisply.

"Uncle Joseph, I love somebody else."

"Eh? What's that? Who?"

"This is, of course, strictly between ourselves."

"Of course."

"Her name is Wickham. I expect you know the family? The Hertfordshire Wickhams."

"Hertfordshire Wickhams!" Sir Joseph snorted, with extraordinary violence.

"Bosher Street Wickhams, you mean. If it's Roberta Wickham, a red-headed hussy who ought to be smacked and sent to bed without her supper, that's the girl I fined this morning."

"You fined her!" gasped Roland.

"Five pounds," said his uncle, complacently. "Wish I could have given her five years. Menace to the public safety. How on earth did you get to know a girl like that?"

"I met her at a dance. I happened to mention that I was a critic of some small standing, and she told me that her mother wrote novels. I chanced to receive one of Lady Wickham's books for review shortly afterwards, and the—er—favourable tone of my notice apparently gave her some pleasure." Roland's voice trembled slightly, and he blushed. Only he knew what it had cost him to write eulogistically of that terrible book. "She has invited me down to Skeldings, their place in Hertfordshire, for the week-end to-morrow."

"Send her a telegram."

"Saying what?"

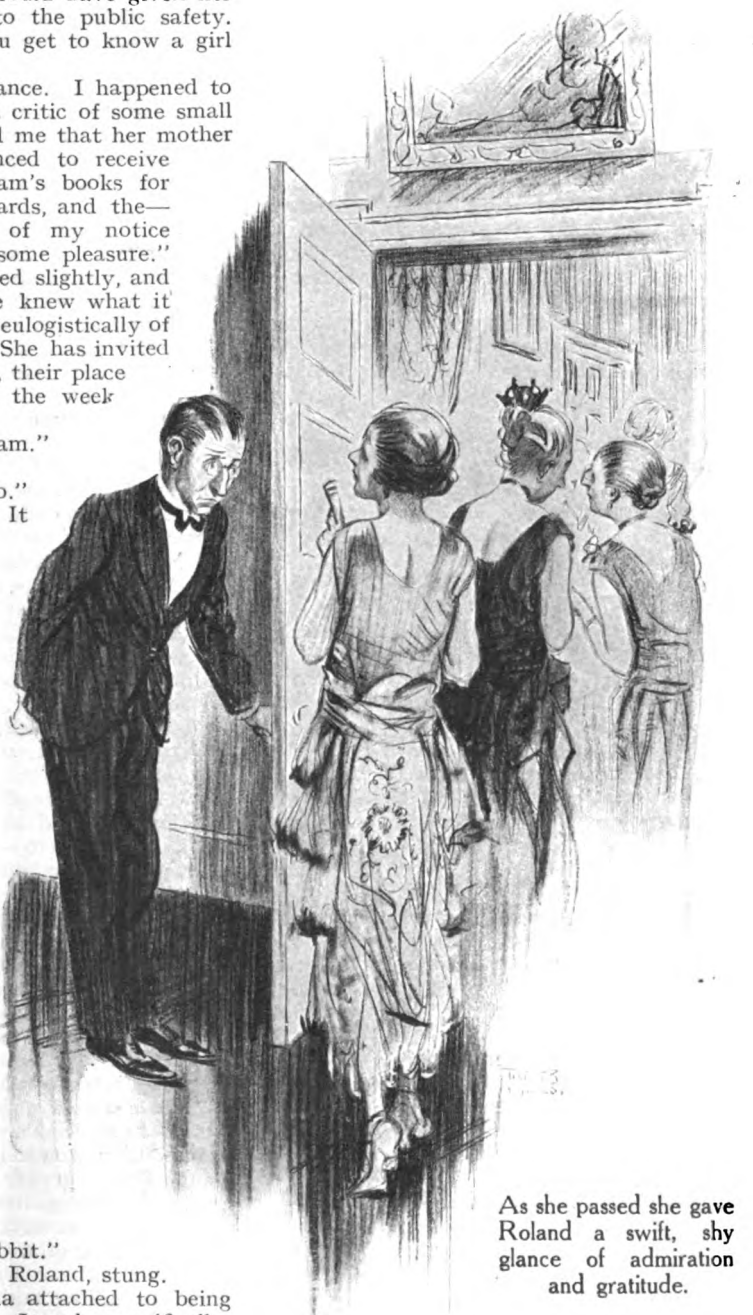
'That you can't go."

"But I am going." It is a pretty tough thing if a man of letters who has sold his critical soul is not to receive the reward of his crime. "I wouldn't miss it for anything."

"Don't you be a fool, my boy," said Sir Joseph. "I've known you all your life—know you better than you know yourself—and I tell you it's sheer insanity for a man like you to dream of marrying a girl like that. Forty miles she was going, right down the middle of Piccadilly. The constable proved it up to the hilt. You're a quiet, sensible fellow, and you ought to marry a quiet, sensible girl. You're what I call a rabbit."

"A rabbit!" cried Roland, stung.

"There is no stigma attached to being a rabbit," said Sir Joseph, pacifically. "Every man with a grain of sense is one. It simply means that you prefer a normal, wholesome life to gadding about like a—like a non-rabbit. You're going out of your class, my boy. You're trying to change your



As she passed she gave Roland a swift, shy glance of admiration and gratitude.

zoological species, and it can't be done. Half the divorces to-day are due to the fact that rabbits won't believe they're rabbits till it's too late. It is the peculiar nature of the rabbit——"

"I think we had better join the ladies, Uncle Joseph," said Roland, frostily. "Aunt Emily will be wondering what has become of us."

IN spite of the innate modesty of all heroes, it was with something closely resembling chagrin that Roland discovered, on going to his club in the morning, that the Press of London was unanimously silent on the subject of his last night's exploit. Not that one expected anything in the nature of publicity, of course, or even desired it. Still, if there had happened to be some small paragraph under some such title as "Gallant Behaviour of an Author" or "Critical Moment for a Critic," it would have done no harm to the sale of that little book of thoughtful essays which Blenkinsop's had just put on the market.

And the fellow had seemed so touchingly grateful at the time.

Pawing at Roland's chest with muddy hands, he had told him that he would never forget this blinking moment as long as he lived. And he had not bothered even to go and call at a newspaper office.

Well, well! He swallowed his disappointment and a light lunch and returned to his flat, where he found Bryce, his man-servant, completing the packing of his suit-case.

"Packing?" said Roland. "That's right. Did those socks arrive?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good!" said Roland. They were some rather special gents' half-hose from the Burlington Arcade, subtly passionate, and he was hoping much from them. He wandered to the table, and became aware that on it lay a large cardboard box. "Hullo, what's this?"

"A man left it a short while ago, sir. A somewhat shabbily-dressed person. The note accompanying it is on the mantelpiece, sir."

Roland went to the mantelpiece; and, having inspected the dirty envelope for a moment with fastidious distaste, opened it in a gingerly manner.

"The box appears to me, sir," continued Bryce, "to contain something alive. It seemed to me that I received the impression of something squirming."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Roland, staring at the letter.

"Sir?"

"It's a snake. That fool has sent me a snake. Of all the——"

A hearty ringing at the front-door bell interrupted him. Bryce, rising from the suit-case, vanished silently. Roland continued to regard the unwelcome gift with a peevish frown.

"Miss Wickham, sir," said Bryce at the door.

The visitor, who walked springily into the room, was a girl of remarkable and rather impish beauty. She resembled a particularly good-looking schoolboy who had dressed up in his sister's clothes. She appeared, from the way she moved, to be built of whalebone and indiarubber; and there was a vitality in her bright hazel eyes which for years had caused nervous relatives to wonder apprehensively what she was going to be up to next.

"Ah!" she said, cocking a bright eye at the suit-case. "I'm glad you're bustling about. We ought to be starting soon. I'm going to drive you down in the two-seater." She began a restless tour of the room. "Hullo!" she said, arriving at the box. "What might this be?" She shook it experimentally. "I say! There's something squishy inside!"

"Yes, it's——"

"Roland," said Miss Wickham, having conducted further experiments, "immediate investigation is called for. Inside this box, old dear, there is most certainly some living organism. When you shake it, it distinctly squishes."

"It's all right. It's only a snake."

"Snake!"

"Perfectly harmless," he hastened to assure her. "The fool expressly states that. Not that it matters, because I'm going to send it straight back, unopened."

Miss Wickham squeaked with pleased excitement.

"Who's been sending you snakes?"

Roland coughed diffidently.

"I happened to—er—save a man's life last night. I was coming along at the corner of Duke Street——"

"Now, isn't that an extraordinary thing?" said Miss Wickham, meditatively. "Here have I lived all these years and never thought of getting a snake!"

"——when a man——"

"The one thing every young girl should have."

"——slipped off the pavement——"

"There are the most tremendous possibilities in a snake. The diner-out's best friend. Pop it on to the table after the soup and be Society's pet."

Roland, though nothing, of course, could shake his great love, was conscious of a passing feeling of annoyance.

"I'll tell Bryce to take the thing back to the man," he said, abandoning his story as a total loss.

"Take it back?" said Miss Wickham, amazed. "But, Roland, what frightful waste! Why, there are moments in life when knowing where to lay your hand on a snake means more than words can tell." She started. "Golly! Didn't you once say that old Sir Joseph What's-his-name—the beak, you know—was your uncle? He fined me five of the best yesterday for absolutely crawling along Piccadilly. He needs a sharp lesson. He must be taught that he can't go about the place persecuting the innocent like that. I'll tell you what. Ask him to lunch here and hide the thing in his napkin! That'll make him think a bit!"

"No, no!" cried Roland, shuddering strongly.

"Roland! For my sake!"

"No, no, really!"

"And you've said dozens of times that you would do anything in the world for me!" She mused. "Well, at least let me tie a string to it and dangle it out of window in front of the next old lady that comes along."

"No, no, please! I must send it back to the man."

Miss Wickham's discontent was plain, but she seemed to accept defeat.

"Oh, all right, if you're going to refuse me every little thing! But let me tell you, my lad, that you're throwing away the laugh of a lifetime. Wantonly and callously chucking it away. Where is Bryce? Gone to earth in the kitchen, I suppose. I'll go and give him the thing while you strap the suit-case. We ought to be starting, or we sha'n't get there by tea-time."

"Let me do it."

"No, I'll do it."

"You mustn't trouble."

"No trouble," said Miss Wickham, amiably.

IN this world, as has been pointed out in various ways by a great many sages and philosophers, it is wiser for the man who shrinks from being disappointed not to look forward too keenly to moments that promise pleasure. Roland Attwater, who had anticipated considerable enjoyment from his drive down to Skeldings Hall, soon discovered, when the car had threaded its way through the London traffic and was out in the open country, that the conditions were not right for enjoyment. Miss Wickham did not appear to share the modern girl's distaste for her home. She plainly wanted to get there as quickly as possible. It seemed to Roland that from the time they left High Barnet to the moment when, with a grinding of brakes, they drew up at the door of Skeldings Hall the two-seater had only touched Hertfordshire at odd spots.

Yet, as they alighted, Roberta Wickham voiced a certain dissatisfaction with her work.

"Forty-three minutes," she said, frowning at her watch. "I can do better than that."

"Can you?" gulped Roland. "Can you, indeed?"

"Well, we're in time for tea, anyhow. Come in and meet the mater. Forgotten Sports of the Past—Number Three, Meeting the Mater."

Roland met the mater. The phrase, however, is too mild and inexpressive and does not give a true picture of the facts. He not merely met the mater; he was engulfed and swallowed up by the mater. Lady Wickham, that popular novelist ("Strikes a singularly fresh note."—R. Morcsby Attwater in the *New Examiner*), was delighted to see her guest. Welcoming Roland to her side, she proceeded to strike so many singularly fresh notes that he was unable to tear himself away till it was time to dress for dinner. She was a large, severe woman, with a voice that never stopped, and she was still talking with unimpaired volubility on the subject of her books, of which Roland had been kind enough to write so appreciatively, when the gong went.

"Is it as late as that?" she said, surprised, releasing Roland, who had thought it later. "We shall have to go on with our little talk after dinner. You know your room? No? Oh, well, Claude will show you. Claude, will you take Mr. Attwater up with you? His room is at the end of your corridor. By the way, you don't know each other, do you? Sir Claude Lynn—Mr. Attwater."

The two men bowed; but in Roland's bow there was not that heartiness which we like to see in our friends when we introduce them to fellow-guests. A considerable part of the agony which he had been enduring for the last two hours had been caused not so much by Lady Wickham's eloquence, though that had afflicted him sorely, as by the spectacle of this man Lynn, whoever he might be, monopolizing the society of Bobbie Wickham in a distant corner. There had been to him something intolerably possessive about the back of Sir Claude's neck as he bent towards Miss Wickham. It was the neck of a man who is being much more intimate and devotional than a jealous rival cares about.

The close-up which he now received of this person did nothing to allay Roland's apprehension. The man was handsome, sickeningly handsome, with just that dark, dignified, clean-cut handsomeness which attracts impressionable girls. It was, indeed, his dignity that so oppressed Roland now. There was that about Sir Claude Lynn's calm

and supercilious eye that made a fellow feel that he belonged to entirely the wrong set in London and that his trousers were bagging at the knees.

"A most delightful man," whispered Lady Wickham, as Sir Claude moved away to open the door for Bobbie. "Between ourselves, the original of Captain Mauleverer, D.S.O., in my 'Blood Will Tell.' Very old family, ever so much money, Plays polo splendidly. And tennis. And golf. A superb shot. Member for East Bittlesham, and I hear on all sides that he may be in the Cabinet any day."

"Indeed?" said Roland, coldly.

IT seemed to Lady Wickham, as she sat with him in her study after dinner—she had stated authoritatively that he would much prefer a quiet chat in that shrine of literature to any shallow revelry that might be going on elsewhere—that Roland was a trifle distrait. Nobody could have worked harder to entertain him than she. She read him the first seven chapters of the new novel on which she was engaged, and told him in gratifying detail the plot of the rest of it, but somehow all did not seem well. The young man, she noticed, had developed a habit of plucking at his hair; and once he gave a sharp, gulping cry which startled her. Lady Wickham began to feel disappointed in Roland, and was not sorry when he excused himself.

"I wonder," he said, in a rather overwrought sort of way, "if you would mind if I just went and had a word with Miss Wickham? I—I—there's something I wanted to ask her."

"Certainly," said Lady Wickham, without warmth. "You will probably find her in the billiard-room. She said something about having a game with Claude. Sir Claude is wonderful at billiards. Almost like a professional."

Bobbie was not in the billiard-room, but Sir Claude was, practising dignified cannons which never failed to come off. At Roland's entrance he looked up like an inquiring statue.

"Miss Wickham?" he said. "She left half an hour ago. I think she went to bed."

He surveyed Roland's flushed dishevelment for a moment with a touch of disapproval, then resumed his cannons. Roland, though he had that on his mind concerning which he desired Miss Wickham's counsel and sympathy, felt that it would have to stand over till the morning. Meanwhile, lest his hostess should pop out of the study and recapture him, he decided to go to bed himself.

He had just reached the passage where his haven lay, when a door which had apparently been standing ajar opened and Bobbie appeared, draped in a sea-green negligée of such a calibre that Roland's heart leaped convulsively and he clutched at the wall for support.

"Oh, there you are," she said, a little petulantly. "What a time you've been!"

"Your mother was——"

"Yes, I suppose she would be," said Miss Wickham, understandingly. "Well, I only wanted to tell you about Sidney."

"Sidney? Do you mean Claude?"

"No. Sidney. The snake. I was in your room just after dinner, to see if you had everything you wanted, and I noticed the box on your dressing-table."

"I've been trying to get hold of you all the evening to ask you what to do about that," said Roland, feverishly. "I was most awfully upset when I saw the beastly thing. How Bryce came to be such an idiot as to put it in the car——"

"He must have misunderstood me," said Bobbie, with a clear and childlike light shining in her hazel eyes. "I suppose he thought I said 'Put this in the back' instead of 'Take this back.' But what I wanted to say was that it's all right."

"All right?"

"Yes. That's why I've been waiting up to see you. I thought that, when you went to your room and found the box open, you might be a bit worried."

"The box open!"

"Yes. But it's all right. It was I who opened it."

"Oh, but I say—you—you oughtn't to have done that. The snake may be roaming about all over the house."

"Oh, no, it's all right. I know where it is."

"That's good."

"Yes, it's all right. I put him in Claude's bed."

Roland Attwater clutched at his hair as violently as if he had been listening to chapter six of Lady Wickham's new novel.

"You—you—you—what?"

"I put him in Claude's bed."

Roland uttered a little whinnying sound, like a very old horse a very long way away.

"Put him in Claude's bed!"

"Put him in Claude's bed."

"But—but—but why?"

"Why not?" asked Miss Wickham, reasonably.

"But—oh, my heavens!"

"Something on your mind?" inquired Miss Wickham, solicitously.

"It will give him an awful fright."

"Jolly good for him. I was reading an article in the evening paper about it. Did you know that fear increases the secretory

activity of the thyroid, suprarenal, and pituitary glands ? Well, it does. Bucks you up, you know. Regular tonic. It'll be like a day at the seaside for old Claude when he puts his bare foot on Sidney. Well, I must be turning in. Got that schoolgirl complexion to think about. Good night."

FOR some minutes after he had tottered to his room, Roland sat on the edge of the bed in deep meditation. At one time it seemed as if his reverie was going to take a pleasant turn. This was when the thought presented itself to him that he must have overestimated the power of Sir Claude's fascination. A girl could not, he felt, have fallen very deeply under a man's spell if she started filling his bed with snakes the moment she left him.

For an instant, as he toyed with this heartening reflection, something remotely resembling a smile played about Roland's sensitive mouth. Then another thought came to wipe the smile away—the realization that, while the broad general principle of putting snakes in Sir Claude's bed was entirely admirable, the flaw in the present situation lay in the fact that this particular snake could be so easily traced to its source. The butler, or whoever had taken his luggage upstairs, would be sure to remember carrying up a mysterious box. Probably it had squished as he carried it and was already the subject of comment in the servants' hall. Discovery was practically certain.

She read him the first seven chapters of the new novel on which she was engaged.

Roland rose jerkily from his bed. There was only one thing to be done, and he must do it immediately. He must go to Sir Claude's room and retrieve his lost pet. He crept to the door and listened carefully. No sound came to disturb the stillness of the house. He stole out into the corridor.

It was at this precise moment that Sir Claude Lynn, surfeited with cannons, put on his coat, replaced his cue in the rack, and came out of the billiard-room.

IF there is one thing in this world that should be done quickly or not at all, it is the removal of one's personal snake from the bed of a comparative stranger. Yet Roland, brooding over the snowy coverlet, hesitated. All his life he had had a horror of crawling and slippery things. At his private school, while other boys had fondled frogs and achieved terms of intimacy with slow-worms, he had not been able to bring himself even to keep white mice. The thought of plunging his hand between those sheets and groping for an object of such recognized squishiness as Sidney appalled him. And, even as he hesitated, there came from the corridor outside the sound of advancing footsteps.

Roland was not by nature a resourceful young man, but even a child would have known what to do in this crisis. There was a large cupboard on the other side of the room, and its door had been left invitingly open. In the rapidity with which he bolted into this his uncle Joseph would no doubt have seen further convincing evidence of his rabbit-hood. He reached it and burrowed behind a mass of hanging clothes just as Sir Claude entered the room.

IT was some small comfort to Roland—and at the moment he needed what comfort he could get, however small—to find that there was plenty of space in the cupboard. And what was even better, seeing that he had had no time to close the door, it was generously filled with coats, overcoats, raincoats, and trousers. Sir Claude Lynn was evidently a man who believed in taking an extensive wardrobe with him on country-house visits; and, while he deplored the dandyism which this implied, Roland would not have had it otherwise. Nestling in the undergrowth, he peered out between a raincoat and a pair of golfing knickerbockers. A strange silence had fallen, and he was curious to know what his host was doing with himself.

At first he could not sight him; but, shifting slightly to the left, he brought him into focus, and discovered that in the interval that had passed Sir Claude had removed nearly all his clothes and was now standing before the open window, doing exercises.

It was not prudery that caused this spectacle to give Roland a sharp shock. What made him start so convulsively was the man's horrifying aspect as revealed in the nude. Downstairs, in the conventional dinner-costume of the well-dressed man, Sir Claude Lynn had seemed robust and soldierly, but nothing in his appearance then had prepared Roland for the ghastly physique which he exhibited now. He seemed twice his previous size, as if the removal of constricting garments had caused him to bulge in every direction. When he inflated his chest, it looked like a barrel. And, though Roland in the circumstances would have preferred any other simile, there was only one thing to which his rippling muscles could be compared. They were like snakes, and nothing but snakes. They heaved and twisted beneath his skin just as Sidney was presumably even now heaving and twisting beneath the sheets.

If ever there was a man, in short, in whose bedroom one would rather not have been concealed in circumstances which might only too easily lead to a physical encounter, that man was Sir Claude Lynn; and Roland, seeing him, winced away with a shudder so violent that a coat-hanger which had been trembling on the edge of its peg fell with a disintegrating clatter.

There was a moment of complete silence: then the trousers behind which he cowered were snatched away, and a huge hand, groping like the tentacle of some dreadful marine monster, seized him painfully by the hair and started pulling.

"Ouch!" said Roland, and came out like a winkle at the end of a pin.

A modesty which Roland, who was modest himself, should have been the first to applaud had led the other to clothe himself hastily for this interview in a suit of pyjamas of a stupefying mauve. In all his life Roland had never seen such a colour-scheme; and in some curious way the brilliance of them seemed to complete his confusion. The result was that, instead of plunging at once into apologies and explanations, he remained staring with fallen jaw; and his expression, taken in conjunction with the fact that his hair, rumpled by the coats, appeared to be standing on end, supplied Sir Claude with a theory which seemed to cover the case. He remembered that Roland had had much the same cock-eyed look when he had come into the billiard-room. He recalled that immediately after dinner Roland had disappeared and had not joined the rest of the party in the drawing-room. Obviously the fellow must have been drinking like a fish in some secret part of the house for hours.

"Get out!" he said curtly, taking Roland by the arm with a look of disgust and leading him sternly to the door. An abstemious man himself, Sir Claude Lynn had a correct horror of excess in others. "Go and sleep it off. I suppose you can find your way to your room? It's the one at the end of the corridor, as you seem to have forgotten."

"But listen——"

"I cannot understand how a man of any decent upbringing can make such a beast of himself."

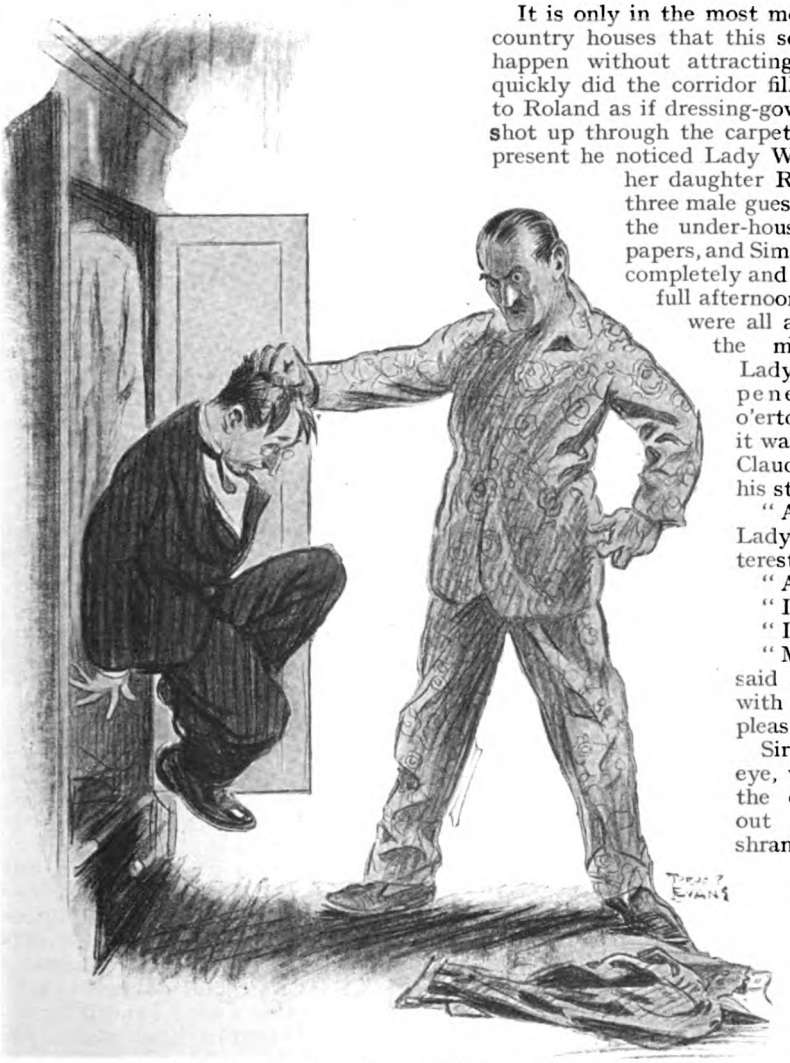
"Do listen!"

"Don't shout like that," snapped Sir Claude, severely. "Good heavens, man, do you want to wake the whole house? If you dare to open your mouth again, I'll break you into little bits."

Roland found himself out in the passage, staring at a closed door. Even as he stared it opened sharply, and the upper half of the mauve-clad Sir Claude popped out.

"No drunken singing in the corridor, mind!" said Sir Claude, sternly, and disappeared.

It was a little difficult to know what to do. Sir Claude had counselled slumber, but the suggestion was scarcely a practical one.



A huge hand seized him painfully by the hair.

On the other hand, there seemed nothing to be gained by hanging about in the passage. With slow and lingering steps Roland moved towards his room, and had just reached it when the silence of the night was rent by a shattering scream; and the next moment there shot through the door he had left a large body. And, as Roland gazed dumbly, a voice was raised in deafening appeal.

"Shot-gun!" vociferated Sir Claude. "Help! Shot-gun! Bring a shot-gun, somebody!"

There was not the smallest room for doubt that the secretory activity of his thyroid, suprarenal, and pituitary glands had been increased to an almost painful extent.

It is only in the most modern and lively country houses that this sort of thing can happen without attracting attention. So quickly did the corridor fill that it seemed to Roland as if dressing-gowned figures had shot up through the carpet. Among those present he noticed Lady Wickham in blue, her daughter Roberta in green, three male guests in bath-robes, the under-housemaid in curl-papers, and Simmons, the butler, completely and correctly clad in full afternoon costume. They were all asking what was the matter, but, as Lady Wickham's penetrating voice o'ertopped the rest, it was to her that Sir Claude turned to tell his story.

"A snake?" said Lady Wickham, interested.

"A snake."

"In your bed?"

"In my bed."

"Most unusual," said Lady Wickham, with a touch of displeasure.

Sir Claude's rolling eye, wandering along the corridor, picked out Roland as he shrank among the shadows. He pointed at him with such swift suddenness that his hostess only saved herself from a nasty blow by means of some shifty footwork.

"That's the man!" he cried.

Lady Wickham, already ruffled, showed signs of peevishness.

"My dear Claude," she said, with a certain asperity, "do come to some definite decision. A moment ago you said there was a snake in your room; now you say it was a man. Besides, can't you see that that is Mr. Attwater? What would he be doing in your room?"

"I'll tell you what he was doing. He was putting that infernal snake in my bed. I found him there."

"Found him there? In your bed?"

"In my cupboard. Hiding. I hauled him out."

All eyes were turned upon Roland. His

own he turned with a look of wistful entreaty upon Roberta Wickham. A cavalier of the nicest gallantry, nothing, of course, would induce him to betray the girl; but surely she would appreciate that the moment had come for her to step forward and clear a good man's name with a full explanation.

He had been too sanguine. A pretty astonishment lit up Miss Wickham's lovely eyes. But her equally lovely mouth did not open.

"But Mr. Attwater has no snake," argued Lady Wickham. "He is a well-known man-of-letters. Well-known men-of-letters," she said, stating a pretty generally recognized fact, "do not take snakes with them when they go on visits."

A new voice joined in the discussion.

"Begging your pardon, your ladyship."

It was the voice of Simmons, grave and respectful.

"Begging your pardon, your ladyship, it is my belief that Mr. Attwater did have a serpent in his possession. Thomas, who conveyed his baggage to his room, mentioned a cardboard box that seemed to contain something alive."

From the expression of the eyes that once more raked him in his retirement, it was plain that the assembled company were of the opinion that it was Roland's turn to speak. But speech was beyond him. He had been backing slowly for some little time, and now, as he backed another step, the handle of his bedroom door insinuated itself into the small of his back. It was almost as if the thing were hinting to him that refuge that lay beyond.

He did not resist the kindly suggestion. With one quick, emotional movement he turned, plunged into his room, and slammed the door behind him.

From the corridor without came the sound of voices in debate. He was unable to distinguish words, but the general trend of them was clear. Then silence fell.

Roland sat on his bed, staring before him. He was roused from his trance by a tap on the door.

"Who's that?" he cried, bounding up. His eye was wild. He was prepared to sell his life dearly.

"It is I, sir. Simmons."

"What do you want?"

The door opened a few inches. Through the gap there came a hand. In the hand was a silver salver. On the salver lay something squishy that writhed and wriggled.

"Your serpent, sir," said the voice of Simmons.

IT was the opinion of Roland Attwater that he was now entitled to the remainder of the night in peace. The hostile forces outside must now, he felt, have fired their last shot. He sat on his bed, thinking deeply, if incoherently. From time to time the clock on the stables struck the quarters, but he did not move. And then into the silence it seemed to him that some sound intruded—a small tapping sound that might have been the first tentative efforts of a very young woodpecker just starting out in business for itself. It was only after this small noise had continued for some moments that he recognized it for what it was.

Somebody was knocking softly on his door.

There are moods in which even the mildest man will turn to bay, and there gleamed in Roland Attwater's eyes as he strode to the door and flung it open a baleful light. And such was his militant condition that, even when he glared out and beheld Roberta Wickham, still in that green negligée, the light did not fade away. He regarded her malevolently.

"I thought I'd better come and have a word with you," whispered Miss Wickham.

"Indeed?" said Roland.

"I wanted to explain."

"Explain!"

"Well," said Miss Wickham, "you may not think there's any explanation due to you, but I really feel there is. Oh, yes, I do. You see, it was this way. Claude had asked me to marry him."

"And so you put a snake in his bed? Of course! Quite natural!"

"Well, you see, he was so frightfully perfect and immaculate and dignified and—oh, well, you've seen him for yourself, so you know what I mean. He was too darned overpowering—that's what I'm driving at—and it seemed to me that if I could only see him really human and undignified—just once—I might—well, you see what I mean?"

"And the experiment, I take it, was successful?"

Miss Wickham wriggled her small toes inside her slippers.

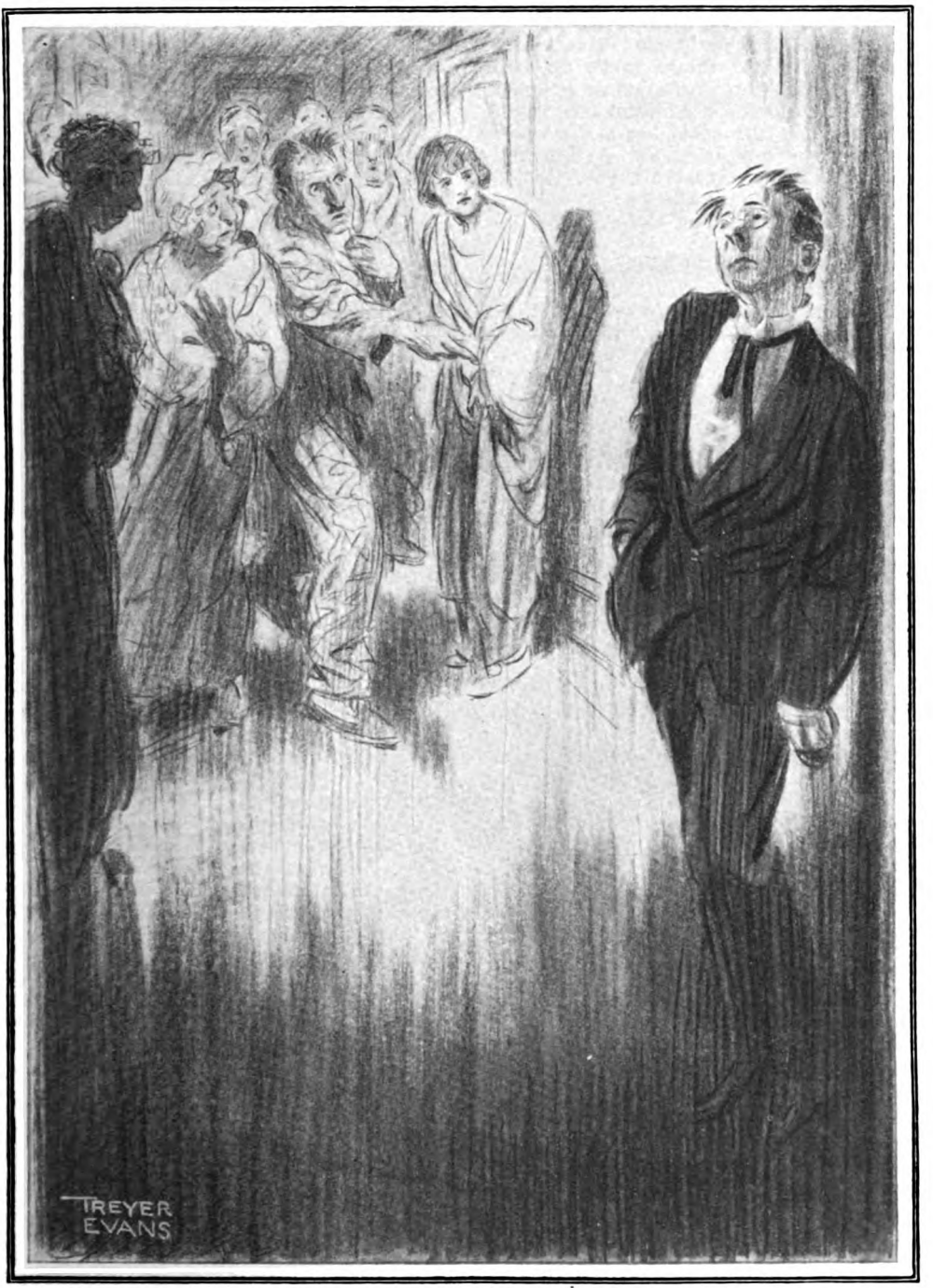
"It depends which way you look at it. I'm not going to marry him, if that's what you mean."

"I should have thought," said Roland, coldly, "that Sir Claude behaved in a manner sufficiently—shall I say human?—to satisfy even you."

Miss Wickham giggled reminiscently.

"He did leap, didn't he? He reminded me of those hills in the Bible. 'Why skip ye so, ye high hills?' Do you remember? But it's all off, just the same."

"Might I ask why?"



Sir Claude's rolling eye picked out Roland as he shrank among the shadows. "That's the man!" he cried.

"Those pyjamas, old dear," said Miss Wickham, firmly. "The moment I caught a glimpse of them, I said to myself, 'No wedding bells for me!' No! I've seen too much of life, old thing, to be optimistic about a man who wears mauve pyjamas." She plunged for a space into maiden meditation. When she spoke again, it was on another aspect of the affair. "I'm afraid mother is rather cross with you, Roland."

"You surprise me!"

"Never mind. You can slate her next novel."

"I intend to," said Roland, grimly, remembering what he had suffered in the study from chapters one to seven of it.

"But meanwhile I don't think you had better meet her again just yet. Do you know, I really think the best plan would be for you to go away to-night without saying good-bye. There is a very good milk-train which gets you into London at six-forty-five."

"When does it start?"

"At three-fifteen."

"I'll take it," said Roland.

There was a pause. Roberta Wickham drew a step closer.

"Roland," she said, softly, "you were a dear not to give me away. I do appreciate it so much."

"Not at all!"

"There would have been an awful row. I expect mother would have taken away my car."

"Ghastly!"

"I want to see you again quite soon, Roland. I'm coming up to London next week. Will you give me lunch? And then we might go and sit in Kensington Gardens or somewhere where it's quiet."

Roland eyed her fixedly.

"I'll drop you a line," he said.

SIR JOSEPH MORESBY was an early breakfaster. The hands of the clock pointed to five minutes past eight as he entered his dining-room with a jaunty and hopeful step. There were, his senses told him, kidneys and bacon beyond that door. To his surprise he found that there was also his nephew Roland. The young man was pacing the carpet restlessly. He had a rumpled look, as if he had slept poorly, and his eyes were pink about the rims.

"Roland!" exclaimed Sir Joseph. "Good gracious! What are you doing here? Didn't you go to Skeldings after all?"

"Yes, I went," said Roland, in a strange, toneless voice.

"Then what——?"

"Uncle Joseph," said Roland, "you remember what we were talking about at dinner? Do you really think Lucy would have me if I asked her to marry me?"

"What! My dear boy, she's been in love with you for years."

"Is she up yet?"

"No. She doesn't breakfast till nine."

"I'll wait."

Sir Joseph grasped his hand.

"Roland, my boy——" he began.

But there was that on Roland's mind that made him unwilling to listen to set speeches.

"Uncle Joseph," he said, "do you mind if I join you for a bite of breakfast?"

"My dear boy, of course——"

"Then I wish you would ask them to be frying two or three eggs and another rasher or so. While I'm waiting I'll be starting on a few kidneys."

IT was ten minutes past nine when Sir Joseph happened to go into the morning-room. He had supposed it empty, but he perceived that the large armchair by the window was occupied by his nephew Roland. He was leaning back with the air of one whom the world is treating well. On the floor beside him sat Lucy, her eyes fixed adoringly on the young man's face.

"Yes, yes," she was saying. "How wonderful! Do go on, darling."

Sir Joseph tiptoed out, unnoticed. Roland was speaking as he softly closed the door.

"Well," Sir Joseph heard him say, "it was raining, you know, and just as I reached the corner of Duke Street——"

(Another P. G. Wodehouse story next month.)

NEXT MONTH:

Another Sherlock Holmes Story:

"THE ADVENTURE OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS CLIENT."

When I Was Young

A series of articles by celebrities of to-day describing how they viewed life in their early years.

2.

THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF BIRKENHEAD, P.C., D.L.

FOR all who have played any part in the world's affairs there is a pleasure in looking back to early days, even when these have become remote. I myself am thinking now of the time when the romance of life, at first unrelated to reality, introduced me to adventures worth encountering and to acts worth doing. If fortune favours my pen, therefore, I conceive that it will be of some benefit to many of those whose activities lie broadly before them if I try to expound what in certain definite ways I learned from early influences. THE STRAND MAGAZINE appeals to a world-wide audience; more especially, indeed, to that intelligent type of mind which is alert of heart and active in desire. And it is because I would lay stress on this quality of lively forethought that I hope here to illuminate the path of youth, always courageously expectant; and so to provide, for the years which lie ahead, something like a working philosophy.

Photo. Lancaster.

Age 2.

I must not be taken too literally, but, though I am dealing with retrospect, I will at once make one anticipatory confession. Philosophy, in later days, I liked little. When confronted with it, I wrestled with it without sympathy. Probably even my earliest actions exhibited this instinctive dislike. But I can supply no detail or episode in proof of it. Childhood is compacted of the ridiculous and the sublime, and I was just a normal child, possessing a normal self, which left these characteristics behind in order to develop others in the normal life of school.

One point comes to me out of the past very vividly indeed. English to the core, and therefore very fond of home, I deem it providential that Liverpool and Birkenhead nourished my youth. These places hummed with activity and progressiveness. They were full of suggestions of a wider world because of their proximity to the sea. But here, in honour bound, let me interpolate one thought about my home-life, an influence on which everything else depended. I was fortunate in a father who cared for books and gave me some knowledge of literature which I have never lost. Those with whom I was most intimately connected in boyhood were no strangers to the struggle for a secure existence. Nor were they daunted by this urgent necessity. That fathers should fend for their sons, and, in their absence, that mothers should take

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the heroic parental duty upon themselves, became part and parcel of my own upbringing. For all this I am as grateful as I am for the lessons of my own reading and thinking, drawn from the very books which gave these virtues birth.

But I am by no means minded to think of books alone, in considering the influence of my youth.

There were splendid games at school. There were teams of which we had no reason to be ashamed. I was prouder of getting my colours for cricket and football than I was of obtaining credit for work. I think that to play a game thoroughly well is almost as good a thing as any boy, or any man, can do. All our reputation in the civilized world rests on our known spirit of fairness, though the game, for us, may be a very fine thing in itself.

SO, as in spirit I look back to my own school-days, I see more clearly than ever what we owed to our games. *Mens sana in corpore sano.* The phrase may be too familiar. But it represents a great truth. To enlarge its meaning, I sometimes feel inclined to apply a couplet written on a very different theme by a most distinguished lawyer, the late Mr. Justice Stephen :—

> *" If we do well here, we shall do well there ; And I could tell you no more if I were to preach a whole year."*

The learned judge was thinking of the possible extension of this life and of unsolved problems connected therewith. His words may well cover the problem of our immediate life here and what is to be done with it. For my part, I would urge every man to make himself efficient in some game in spirit and in act. The rest, I have always been persuaded, will then take care of itself.

I have said enough to show that I was happy in all rivalries of the field at school. Sometimes I have been asked if I had any discontent to cherish ; or if, on mature consideration, in the interests of others, I thought that the education I received could have been improved upon. My answer must be that I look back on my career at Birkenhead School with the utmost satisfaction. The school may be called a modern one. Birkenhead in itself is a creation of quite modern times. But the school's roots were in antiquity. It possessed a distinguished master in the Rev. A. Sloman, famed as an editor of Terence. Naturally it was permeated by the idea of the " grand, old, fortifying classical curriculum."

Photo. Robinson & Thompson.

Age 9

This is what I assimilated, without pressure and with some success. I still see many reasons to support a system which has the advantage of many encouragements. The benefactions of the past were splendidly devised ; and to this day the preference for the oldest and finest teaching still maintains its lead. I hope that, as we emerge from the difficulties of the last ten years, new fortunes will be devoted to this very purpose of keeping the classical lamp burning. If I could greet the shade of my first teacher, it would be in terms such as these :—

> *" Sir, I received from your instruction a training so effective that gratitude to yourself is fixed on the retina of my memory for life. I could desire no greater good for any young man than that he should fall into the hands of so enlightened a preceptor."*

In adopting such diction, I should be harking back to thoughts of Edward Gibbon, always a great influence for me, for I read his " Decline and Fall " at least twice through in youth ; or to the phraseology of that even greater man who was made so famous by Boswell's " Life," a book which I read over and over again. And in thus honouring my old master's name, I am also paying a tribute to that " nest of singing-birds," the noble foundation of Pembroke College, Oxford, which Dr. Johnson helped to make illustrious and of which the late head master of Birkenhead School was himself an *alumnus.*

These were influences of a succeeding stage, but still they were associated with all that beginning of activity in which I can find nothing that could be called precocious. I enjoyed all the books which were hailed with delight by the boys of my time. There was " Midshipman Easy," by the ingenious and breezy Captain Marryat. There were lesser lights, wonderfully prolific writers, like William Henry Kingston, who took

us over the seas, aloft or along, to the tune of every kind of chanty, and always in the spirit of a true man. And then, with a prescience which in our own day only Mr. H. G. Wells has emulated, we probed the very depths of the ocean with Jules Verne. For Ballantyne and Henty I felt much the same interest as a little later kept me glued to the pages of books like "Valentine Vox, the Ventriloquist," or "Sylvester Sound, the Somnambulist." I do not think that the first had any permanent influence on my natural powers of speech; and I am sure that the second has never prevented me from remaining very wide awake.

Photo. Hedrington.

Age 16.

There are one or two other aspects of school-life which I may recall for the benefit of others. I suppose it is true enough that I had a conspicuous advantage in a peculiar retentiveness of memory. I understood, even then, the solid usefulness and possible power which would eventually come from academic success. But a really acquisitive intellectual temperament never falls in love with pedantry of any kind. Then, and ever since throughout my life, I have believed in the further enlargement of the mental horizon by means of books. There have been many occasions when I have enjoyed the newest book of the day, hot from the press. But if I were to strike a keynote of special appreciation as affecting not only the emotions of times past, but one which I think ought to find a stronger echo than it does in the present generation, that strain itself would come direct from the Muse which inspired the lines :—

"Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife!
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name."

The Waverley Novels were always a great stand-by for me. Without prejudice, I deviated with almost equal enthusiasm into the stirring romances of Harrison Ainsworth, of Alexandre Dumas, of Honoré de Balzac. "The world went very well then." Figures like those of D'Artagnan or Jean Valjean still live for me in all their power and poignancy. It is said that truth is stranger than fiction. I learned that fiction is not the strangest, but often the strongest form of truth.

As a corollary to my recollected school-days let me add something that appears to me to be apposite to the present time. Currency has been given, not unmixed with criticism, to a certain aphorism with which not very long ago I endeavoured to instil into the minds of the men of Glasgow University their need to guard against the visionary notions which rise from time to time to resist the fact that man is and must be a fighting animal. I believe in the stout heart. I feel that we must not have the palm without the dust. If glittering prizes are awarded, the very source of them has often been thrift and sacrifice. And I think that those who deserve them should be allowed to win them.

OF school, then, I will say that it was in many ways a microcosm of the world. That is a world in which I have long lived with a tendency to make concentrated efforts and a will to win. I never had any doubt as to what I wanted to be. My father was himself a barrister. His death at the early age of forty-five naturally made a great difference to the prospects of his family. As I went forward, I realized that something more than mere determination would be required on my part if my goal was to be attained. I was exceedingly glad when Wadham College awarded me a scholarship, enabling me to go up to Oxford, there to discover

that, for men who would give themselves a little trouble, opportunities were many both of enjoyment and of distinction. It is not only great ability which should be rewarded in this life. Mere common observation is almost as important. Half the square pegs of this world are seen in round holes because opportunities have been missed. I am not looking at this from an Oxford point of view. There are many Universities now. Chances are more plentiful than they were of a fuller education. I would counsel any young man who is deterred by accident or by opposition to make himself thoroughly acquainted with them. I have been through the family mill, and I know what family advice may mean. I was myself thrust for a time into the family business at Birkenhead. I endured this for a few weeks. Then I cut myself free. My younger brother Harold was subjected to the same strain for a good many years. In the end he followed my example. Some of us, to quote a famous Scriptural saying, " in a short time fulfil a long time." I have said enough for encouragement. Let everyone who may do me the honour to read these lines, reflecting, as may very well happen, that his own prospect in the world is not what he would like it to be, refresh his nerve and his will by careful observation. He will find if he exercises these faculties that the world at large is essentially benevolent and will meet him half-way. Moreover, there is an imperial development at hand. If men of our race will only look beyond these islands, the opportunities are boundless.

I have referred to my father's influence on my life. There was one proposition, I remember, where I found myself at variance with him. He cherished an unrestricted admiration for Thomas Carlyle. In this I could not follow him, any more than I could agree with the late Mr. Bonar Law when the latter statesman extolled the " Sage of Chelsea," not indiscriminately, but, like my father, with special reference to " Sartor Resartus." Carlyle does not, and did not, leave me cold. Rather the contrary. I studied him with care, but I could not follow him with any zest, partly because of lack of constructive power where remedies for the state of society might be needed, partly on account of his excesses of style, the style of an alarmist. Nevertheless, I will admit that he helped to mould my thought. And so I went forward to Oxford, gathering not a few flowers from Parnassus on the way.

The ambition to which I referred received a fresh impetus at Wadham. I felt sure I could become a barrister now. But games, as at school, were of inestimable value in all my life at Oxford. I found that in the manifold associations of a great University every facet of man's nature could sparkle. I discovered the divergent capacities of many companions and friends. I took variety as it came to me and I enjoyed it all. There was the Union, with its practical side as a club for over a thousand men, teaching its Treasurer—an office which I filled, a Chancellor in embryo, with reforming zeal—how vital are creature comforts, how necessary are financial provisions, in this life below.

I BECAME President of the Union in due course. In the debates I had tested the value of freedom of speech from many varying points of view. To this day no warmer welcome meets me anywhere than hails me when I cross the threshold of the Oxford Union debating-hall. That is an arena which grows more famous year by year. The society has its vicissitudes. But the accumulated traditions, which include those of Gladstone and Manning, Salisbury and Asquith, Bryce and Creighton, and a hundred more who have played a worthy, sometimes a leading, part in their country's history, are of a variety and distinction which no other kindred institution has ever rivalled. Such an influence as this is of great importance. I owe, personally, a great deal to it. What I should like to see everywhere would be an increasing development of these facilities for debate, whilst the mind remains fluid and receptive. And I would urge the most timid of neophytes to learn the art of expressing opinions openly. This alone is one of the finest instruments of education. To associate with others in friendly rivalry often proves of exceeding value, for so one learns to unravel the skein of controversial perversity, to establish sound reasons for one's prejudice or faith, and to " shoot folly as it flies." All this is an excellent preparation for public life.

The Oxford years gave me, I hope, if little from philosophy in the abstract sense, balance and poise. Anything in the nature of the pedantic I continued most steadfastly to abjure. I cultivated history and poetry in a setting of charm. The classics were always in the ascendant. I loved our English writers, allowing for differences. I have already shown how much and how little I appreciated Carlyle. Dickens at one time I admired a little short of worship. Thackeray, in a sense his colleague and companion—for both exemplified Victorianism at its zenith—provided a parallel, a complement of almost perfect excellence. I could yield to the fascination of melodrama, such as one found at its

Lord Birkenhead at the age of 21.

best and most convincing in "Ouida's" "Under Two Flags." Something higher still attracted me in Robert Louis Stevenson's "Master of Ballantrae." I listened with a thrill to the message of Rudyard Kipling in his "Barrack-Room Ballads." I sometimes stumbled at George Meredith, though I was impressed by his simpler books. His more involved methods gave me positive pain. But I never could fall under the spell of the tortuous, even when critical opinion declared it to be essentially beautiful or profound. Clarity in speech and writing seems to me to be equally important. As for character-drawing, I could see many a merit in the Meredithian portrait-gallery. But some of his portraiture seemed to me merely imitative; and many of his efforts were marred by the forced brilliance which continually flashed over the surface of his prose.

I carried on at Wadham; anxious more than ever to secure the position for which I was to qualify as a barrister. Time and opportunity showed me equal favour. There were prizes to be won in Oxford, and

without any display of fevered diligence I secured a Fellowship at Merton which proved an admirable stand-by during my first years at the Bar, supplemented as it was by a law scholarship of considerable value. With four hundred pounds a year from my college appointment and another four hundred from coaching, my independence was adequately secured. And whilst these sufficiently exacting tasks were being fulfilled I am glad to say that I did not neglect any chance of active enjoyment. Sport of every wholesome kind seemed part of the equipment of the full man. Books were no mere adjunct. They were food and stimulant. What I gathered from them was constantly changing and developing.

It had happened to me to consider the claims of poets like Spenser as a boy, guiding myself through the quaint mazes of his "Faërie Queene." All poetry that answered to the great call of our history was grist to the mill of my enthusiasm. Between Spenser and Tennyson, who still lived and wrote, stretched the gap of centuries. Therein, a golden age of poetry had been thrice at least repeated; and these were interlaced again with other golden ages of Greece and Rome. But Tennyson was all round me, in an influence that had its obvious appeal. The more one thought did the best poets seem to be brothers in arms, knight-companions. As Lord Acton predicated of history, poetry was all one. For me, poetry tended to be one only so long as the axiom of clarity held good. I cultivated the living poets and I also looked backward. I found strength in Keats for all his rarity of spirit. In the etherealism of Shelley I found something I could understand. Betwixt this and Byron's mundanity was a recognizable bond of musical perception. But there was possibly something not quite reasonable in my indifference to Wordsworth. Yet I feared him. I suspected him of an intellectual dyspepsia which I thought might be catching. Perhaps my inappreciation of Browning was an even greater offence, from the general intellectual standpoint of that time. As though in compensation, there came to me what may be summarized as the accepted conclusion of every cultivated mind. All unities and diversities are merged in Shakespeare as poet and playwright. I met his influence in youth and have kept it as a talisman ever since. If I should apostrophize his shade it would be in Matthew Arnold's words:—

"Others abide our question. Thou art free."

THOSE who are blind to the beauty of Shakespeare are inappreciative of the potentialities of life itself; but I need not commend the influence of the poet to a generation which I know is not indifferent to it. He stands for poets collectively in our midst; and I know that the cultivation of the poetic instinct has its uses. But poetry was entrenched also, I always saw quite clearly, on the ground of history, and therein was a picturesqueness of another kind.

In a field which I may call transitional, I found Macaulay a stirring influence. I loved his essays. His ballads raced through my brain. In the course of my reading I gained great value from Green's "Short History of the English People." I rejoiced in the vivid historical studies of J. A. Froude. I continued to extract delight from all the literature which favoured clearness, vividness, imagination; and though, as a contrast, I studied the philosophers with some reserve, I did not shirk them. To the gigantic intellect of Aristotle or of Plato I pay a homage which is not less sincere because there are some elements in philosophy, as written in great books, which I have never been able to appreciate.

These reflections bring Greece to its proper place, a beginning and a culmination, for I accept the view that little moves in the world which is not Greek in its origin. But when I began to come to terms with practical existence in the shape of preparation for a career, I found equal use and profit in the Latin tongue. There was Sallust, in whose pages Rome became living again. There were many others, great in teaching, noble in thought. Incidentally I remember how I paused rather wonderingly when first I became acquainted with the famous edition of Tacitus which bore the name of the late Mr. Henry Furneaux, for the cognomen was both highly distinctive and completely unfamiliar. Little did I think that within twelve years of that introduction I should have the good fortune to marry the great scholar's daughter, and that the name of Furneaux would become inseparably linked with my own. Here, if I speak of a red-letter event like marriage, I am obviously departing from the thoughts of and actions of my youth. But a book was responsible for this slight deviation; and it is to books, so closely entwined with thoughts and deeds, that I now, in conclusion, return.

As I have said, Greece is beginning and end. But it would be highly unpractical if I did not reason out, however few the words may be, the connection of Roman influences, resting as they do on the Greek bedrock, with this England, this Empire of to-day. For I turn to the young men of the present time with a great hope. The need for a Roman courage and a Greek

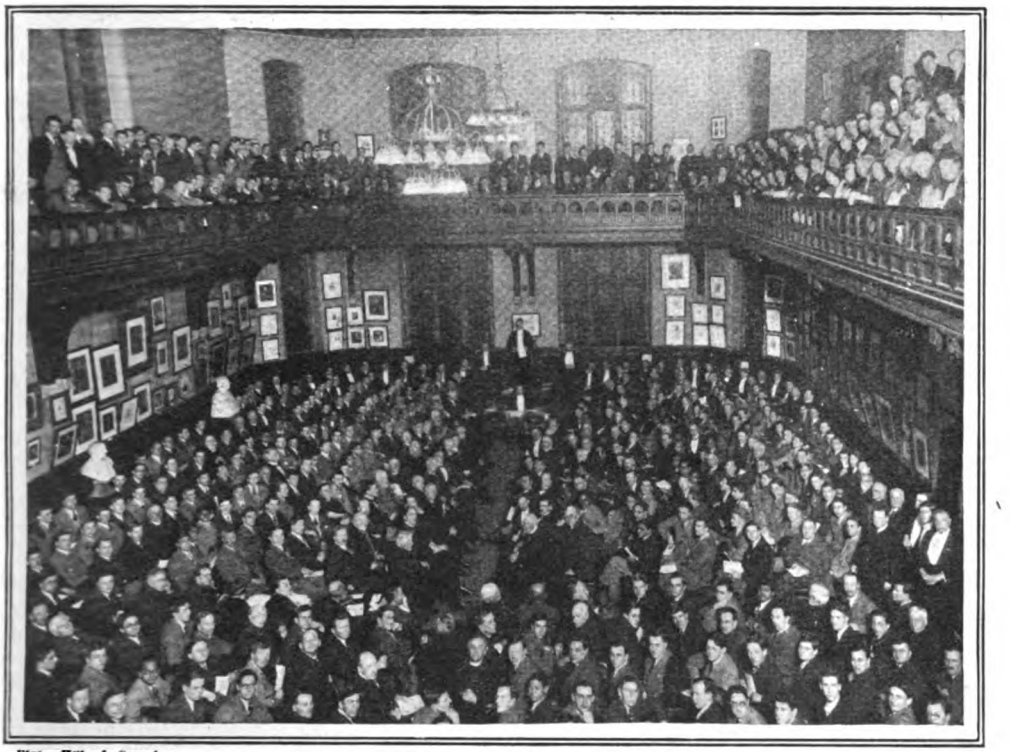


Photo. Hills & Saunders.

A debate at the Union, of which Lord Birkenhead became President while at Oxford.

idealism is not to be obscured. Every man amongst us has to serve, not himself alone, but a community. I have tried to utter words of clear encouragement. I have summed up a great deal in the idea of the playing of the game. It is not to be questioned that as opportunity may bring to any man a great chance to succeed, even to excel, so, too, the opportunities before us may bring back, out of the troubles through which we have been passing, a golden age.

Pericles, who gave his name to such an age in Greece, told the Athenians what was the secret of their country's power, in that great speech which the late Benjamin Jowett has so faithfully given to us in its English form :—

> *" I dwell on the greatness of Athens, the city for which men died. We are not enervated by culture or vulgarized by wealth. We are all interested in public affairs, believing that nothing is lost by free discussion. Our goodness to others springs not from interest, but from the generous confidence of freedom."*

That the freedom which has been threatened recently is likely to be threatened again is not to be denied. But I am persuaded that we shall retain it by developing, each one of us, under the incentives of which I have spoken, his own individuality to the full. Pericles, in that heroic oration, spoken in honour of men who had died for Athens, reminded his hearers that honour alone was ever young. He anticipated the honour of our own race, for which the young, within our memory, have given all they were and all they possessed. Let me associate their spirit with everything that favourably influenced the days of my youth, commending those influences to every heart that beats with hope of any kind. Assuredly that hope should now rise high, in the country and in the scattered dominions of which we are so proud. For the darkest hour has now passed, and it is the darkest hour which precedes the dawn.

Next month's contribution to this series will be by Sir Oliver Lodge.

THE WISH-BONE

by

EDWIN PUGH

ILLUSTRATED BY F. E. HILEY

I.

CAUSE.

CHATER PARK is an eminently genteel suburb in the North of London, favoured of a superior race of clerks, with a sprinkling of minor professional men and tradesmen, retired or still thriving in active business. Mr. Herbert Tunny, managing clerk to Messrs. Gunnett, Park, and Gunnett, of Dunster Court, rice merchants, lived at Chater Park, and was a typical example of his class.

He was a married man, whose years approached the rubicon of forty, with a comely, capable little wife, who had not forgotten how to make the best of herself as well as of her household ; and two children, both less than ten years old. His annual income was rigidly fixed at two hundred and eighty pounds. He was buying his house by instalments. He had been insured as a first-class life ever since he had earned his own living. There was no imminent possibility of his losing his position. He loved his wife with a sober, well-regulated affection. He was free from debt. His digestion was excellent. In short, his state of being was a highly enviable one. For no disturbing element had ever entered his life—until the wish-bone came to vex him with its train of trouble.

It was at about half-past nine on a black November night that the curtain rolled up on this most dramatic incident of his career.

Herbert was in his front-parlour, or drawing-room, playing a game of chess with a neighbour of his own age and habits and condition, a newly-married man named Rollins. They were smoking their pipes. Each had a glass of weak toddy at his elbow. Mrs. Tunny, seated before a clear, leaping fire, was sewing industriously. A sleek cat purred on the hearth. The children were abed. It was cosy and snug in that modest interior. The room breathed an atmosphere of sweet commonplace security, assured peace and comfort. It contained nothing but what was satisfying and restful, alike to the senses and the imagination of its occupants.

" Check ! " said Herbert Tunny, carefully knocking out his pipe on the top bar of the grate ; then, to his wife : " I wonder what the post will bring to-night, Enid ? "

" Ah, I wonder ! " murmured Mrs. Tunny, as her needle flashed back and forth busily.

This remark and rejoinder had been uttered by husband and wife, in precisely the same tone, every night for ten years, though both Mr. and Mrs. Tunny would have been surprised had anyone ever reminded them of this circumstance. Usually, as a cold matter of fact, the post brought them nothing at all. It never by any chance brought them any correspondence more exciting than a chatty letter from a friend or relative, or a hospitable invitation to spend the ensuing Sunday with some admirable person belonging to their own small immediate circle.

The progress of the postman, punctuated by brisk rat-tats drawing nearer with each repetition, was clearly audible in the room. At last the front-gate swung open complainingly. Gravel crunched under a heavy

tread. And then—Bang-bang! went the knocker, and they heard the postman whistling softly to himself as he waited.

"Parcel, eh?" cried Herbert Tunny, rising and hurrying out.

They heard him open the street-door. A blusterous cold wind swept in, and a cloud of smoke bellied out from the grate. There was a brief murmur of voices. "Good night, sir," said the postman. Then the street-door shut. The smoke flowed up its appointed channel again, and Herbert came back into the parlour, holding a small package in his hand.

MRS. TUNNY laid aside her work. Mr. Rollins seized this providential opportunity of covering his defeat to sweep the chessboard with his elbow as he bent forward.

"Whatever can it be?" cried Mrs. Tunny.

Her husband held the package to the light. "It's from abroad," he announced. "I seem to remember the writing, and yet I can't quite fix——" He paused and rubbed his chin slowly.

"Well, open it, dear—open it!" exclaimed his wife, with a touch of pardonable impatience, and she handed him her scissors.

He cut the string, broke the heavy blue seals, and unwrapped the covering of brown paper. A tin tobacco-box was revealed. There was a letter fastened to the lid by another great blob of blue sealing-wax.

"I believe—I shouldn't be surprised if this was from old Ben Crocker, my dear," said Herbert.

"Ben Crocker!" repeated Mrs. Tunny, with a faint inflexion of disgust in her tone. "Dear me! What a very vulgar-sounding name! Who was he?"

"I'm afraid, my dear," replied Herbert, "that he was a bit of a loose fish. No harm in him! . . . He borrowed five pounds from me once. Perhaps——" He had been breaking open the letter as he spoke; now he began to glance through it. He read it once—twice—and was turning to the front page again when Mrs. Tunny said, sharply:—

"Do, for mercy's sake, read it out!"

"It really is the most extraordinary letter. I can't make it out quite," muttered Herbert.

"Does he say what's in the box?" inquired Mrs. Tunny.

"Well, my dear, he does and he doesn't," her husband replied, doubtfully. "Really, it is a most extraordinary——"

"And, really, you are most provoking!" interrupted Mrs. Tunny. "And not too polite to Mr. Rollins either."

"I beg your pardon, Rollins," said Herbert. "There's no secret about it."

"That's all right, old man," said Rollins.

"It is from Ben." He fingered the crisp, thin sheet of paper nervously. "This is what he says: 'Dear 'Erb'—he leaves out the aitch—'Dear 'Erb,—Just a scratch, hoping you are in a perfect state, as it does not leave yours infernally. I am writing this in the Hinterland of Nubia, in an atmosphere that you could cut with a hammy knife. And I hope soon to be out of it, and back home again, when I won't forget what I owe you, though I can never hope to pay more than the money part of your kindness to me at a parlous time—— '"

"What dreadful slang!" Mrs. Tunny broke in, sniffing delicately. "Well?"

"'I am sending you,'" continued her husband, reading, "'a little magic charm or fetish—call it what you like. It is a piece of a wish-bone. Not the sort that you break across the table at Christmas. No. This wish-bone once formed part of the internal economy of a Sacred Ibis, a holy bird that the ancient Egyptians used to worship, because its feathers were said to symbolize the light and shade of the moon. This one came from Memphis, and I got it from an old fakir-chap whom I rescued from a watery grave. (It was the first bath he had ever had, by the way, and he was proportionately grateful to me for curtailing it.) It isn't exactly a pretty thing to send anybody, and it wouldn't look well on your mantelpiece. But there is supposed to be a potent spell on it. And though I used not to believe in any superstitious rot, I have had such wonderful luck since I invoked its aid that I can't help having a half-ashamed faith in its powers, though my good fortune may be a mere coincidence, of course. The thing is said to be two thousand years old. It grants one wish to anybody who gets hold of it. One wish only. What you have to do is to take it out into the moonlight, hold it above your head in your left hand, and just spread yourself on the desire of your heart. Say, "I wish so-and-so to happen." That's all. But be careful. Remember it only grants one wish. And you may choose something that will prove a curse to you. I wished for a bonanza—and got it. Now I regret that I did not wish for length of days, as I am fairly used up, and have to come home to recruit. Only one wish, mind. And be careful. With all my heart,—BEN CROCKER.'"

Herbert Tunny laid down the letter and looked up with glittering eyes. Mrs. Tunny and Mr. Rollins sat staring, with puckered brows. For a full minute not a word passed.

Then: "Pack of nonsense!" said the lady. "Fine easy way of paying off your just debts, that is. I'll believe in it when you get your five pounds back, Herbert—not before."

"It's queer, though," observed Herbert.

"Oh, I know it's all rubbish," he added hastily, catching his wife's look of scorn. "Still——"

"Might as well have a peep at it—what?" ventured Mr. Rollins. "Two thousand years old, did he say? But that can't be."

"Let us see," said Mrs. Tunny.

HERBERT prised up the tight-fitting lid of the tobacco-box gingerly. As it opened a few light-brown flakes, as of scorched paper, drifted out on the table-cloth. Mrs. Tunny and the neighbour had both risen, and now their three heads converged over the box.

They saw a thin, rubbly stick of black substance like charcoal, honeycombed with tiny holes, partially wrapped in a scrap of some material like ancient linen scored over thickly with minute cabalistic characters. The bone, if it were a bone, looked as if it would crumble at a touch. Herbert turned it out, gently, on the brown paper, and a few more brittle morsels of the covering floated over the table.

They stood silently staring at the ugly relic.

Suddenly Mrs. Tunny uttered a muffled scream. The two men's jaws dropped slackly, whilst their hair crisped on their scalps. They staggered apart, trembling, with twitching faces. For, clear and low, a keening cry, inexpressibly mournful and long-drawn-out, had echoed through the room. It seemed to rise up from the box.

"W-what was that?" gasped Herbert, with white lips. His eyes goggled.

For an instant all three were shaken to their souls. Mrs. Tunny was the first to recover herself. "Why, how absurd!" she cried, and stooped and peered under the table and laughed. "The cat! It was only the cat, of course. Tibby—Tibby, then! How brave men are, to be sure!"

Her husband forced a smile. "But I've never known it to howl in the house like that before," he quavered. "Eh—didn't Egyptians worship cats, too?"

"He wants his supper," said Mrs. Tunny, briskly. "And so do I—when you've cleared all this muck away."

They all gazed fixedly at the cat as it stalked stiffly towards the door, its pink mouth agape and smoking, though it emitted no further sound. Herbert Tunny hastened to let it out. Then he returned slowly to the table.

"Better throw it all into the dust-hole," said Mrs. Tunny, with a swift movement of the hands towards the unclean-looking litter of decaying fragments.

"No, no!" cried her husband, hastily. "Let's keep it as a curiosity. I know it's all rot about the magic and that. But—but I wouldn't like Ben to come and see us when he gets back, and find that we had thrown his gift away. It might hurt his feelings. And—and"—speaking rapidly, as though inspired with a happy thought—"if we offend him I may never see my five pounds after all."

"Whereas, now, you've as good as got it, I suppose?" remarked Mrs. Tunny, disdainfully.

He ignored the jeer. "I shall keep it, anyway," he said, with sudden firmness. He fingered the relic tenderly. "Why, it's quite hard. Hard outside, you know, like an egg," he said. "It feels as if you could crunch it in your hand. It's certainly a curiosity."

"Yes, you said that before, my dear," his wife reminded him. "I should get a glass shade for it if I were you. Your disreputable friend doesn't know everything. I think it would look very nice indeed on the mantelpiece."

"One thing, I'm not going to throw it away," said her husband, doggedly.

Mrs. Tunny regarded him quizzically. "Well, I never knew you were superstitious before," said she.

"A man may take a certain interest in these quaint old relics of the past without being superstitious, Enid," said her husband, mildly.

"Well, let us take some interest in the relics of to-day's dinner, then," rejoined Mrs. Tunny. "You'll stay and pick a bit of supper, Mr. Rollins? It's only cold beef, but——"

Mr. Rollins stayed gladly, not because he was especially partial to cold beef, but because he felt that something unusual, abnormal, something mystically romantic, had come to pass with the advent of the wish-bone; and he wanted to talk about it, to revel in strange sensations. Herbert had now replaced the mummified object in the box and put it at the back of the side-board.

At first, when they sat down to supper, only Mrs. Tunny talked. She talked aggressively on general topics, of the current news and everyday prosaic happenings, studiously avoiding any allusion to Ben Crocker's weird gift. Thus it was inevitable that she should monopolize the conversation.

At last Mr. Rollins, unable to contain himself any further, said, abruptly: "Wouldn't it be funny, though, if we were all given one wish? I wonder what we should wish for?"

"I know what I should wish for if I were some men," said Mrs. Tunny, tartly. "I should wish for a little common sense."

"But if you wished for that," her husband

Herbert prised up the tight-fitting lid and their three heads converged over the box.

pointed out, " it would prove that you had plenty of common sense already, and you had better far not wish at all."

" If you're going to begin arguing, Herbert——"

" Not at all," said he. " But I think that's a very suggestive idea of Mr. Rollins's. What should we wish for ? "

" I've told you my wish," said Mrs. Tunny.

" I think I should wish for what your friend regrets he didn't wish for," said Mr. Rollins. " Good health. Nobody can be happy without that."

" Dear me ! I had no idea you were an invalid, Mr. Rollins," said Mrs. Tunny.

" I'm not, that I'm aware of," he replied.

" Then wouldn't that be very much like a person wishing for common sense who had plenty of common sense already ? " she demanded.

" I suppose it would," he admitted. " But what I meant was : I should like to feel that I should always enjoy sound health."

" Ah, but you might have sound health and not enjoy it," said Herbert Tunny. " Supposing you were awfully poor. Think

what a nuisance a hearty appetite would be to you! You would want more food than you could afford. You'd always be hungry. And then, again, supposing you had a lot of black trouble. Supposing there were bereavements and griefs and woes in your family, and you got to feel that life wasn't worth living. Would you want to go on dragging out a miserable existence, when all the time your heart was breaking, and your thoughts were all bitter or sad, and you yourself were so lonely that you longed for death to reunite you to those whom you had loved long since and lost awhile, as the hymn says?"

"A hymn I don't approve of, mind you," Mrs. Tunny broke in, seeking to create a diversion. "That Newman——"

"Never mind about Newman, Enid," said her husband. "We're not talking religion."

"Perhaps it would do us more good if we were," said she.

Herbert Tunny smiled a long-suffering smile. "That's the worst of women," said he. "They can't stick to one subject."

"And the worst of men is that they do," she retorted. "Another tomato, Mr. Rollins?"

II.

EFFECT.

NEXT morning Herbert Tunny and Mr. Rollins journeyed into the City together on the top of the same omnibus, as they always did.

"You don't look up to the mark this morning," Mr. Rollins remarked, peering at his friend.

"I didn't sleep well," said Herbert Tunny.

"Thinking of that wish-bone thing?"

"Well, I was, though I'm half-ashamed to confess it." He forced a smile. "I say, Rollins," he blurted out, "I'd—er—very much rather we didn't talk about it, if you don't mind. It's sort of got on my nerves, somehow. And I feel, you know," he went on, feverishly, "that I made a bit of an ass of myself last night about the thing. It was almost as if I believed in it a little. I can't make out what possessed me. However, I shall throw it away as soon as I get home this evening."

"Why do that if——"

"It's a nasty unclean object to have about the place. I—— But, as I said, I'd rather not talk about it any more. How did the football go yesterday?"

Mr. Rollins eyed his old friend with a covert look of sardonic amusement. Their talk was fitful and disjected that morning.

For three days they journeyed together, as usual, to and from the City, and during that while not a word passed between them concerning the wish-bone. But on the fourth day Herbert broke through his reserve.

"After all, old man," he said, abruptly, "I don't see what harm there can be in talking about it."

"Talking about what?" asked Mr. Rollins, innocently.

"That—that Thing, you know."

"Thought you were going to throw it away?"

"Well—I haven't. I don't like to, somehow. I'm still perfectly convinced, of course, that there's nothing in it—no rotten magic, I mean. And yet—I couldn't tell you how it is, but ever since it came into my possession I have been worried. I find myself continually turning over and over in my mind all the various things that I should like to have, and be, and do. I find myself weighing riches against power, health against happiness, wisdom against goodness, fame against love—yes, Love! Of course, if there were more than one wish it would be simple enough. The bother is——"

"There isn't even one," Mr. Rollins put in.

"I suppose—of course, there isn't. I know that. I'm not a fool, Rollins," said Herbert Tunny, querulously. "Magic is all my eye. We're not living two thousand years ago. But these—these survivals of a superstitious age—they—they make you think."

"Yes," said Rollins. "But that idea of having one wish granted is juvenile enough. All children play with it. I did myself. And I would be prepared to bet—if I ever did such a foolish thing—that you did, too."

"Naturally I did," said Herbert Tunny. "And it's a thundering good job that the fairies I used to appeal to didn't exist. Why, I've wished to be a giant, ten feet high, so that I could lick the schoolmaster. And I've also wished to be so small that I could creep under a closed door. It makes you careful, that does, when——" He checked himself and bit his lip. "It's ridiculous, though," he went on, "that most of the fairy-tales should make a point of insisting that if a man did have one wish granted him he would be bound to make a fool of himself straightaway. Don't you think that a man might choose wisely now and then?"

"No, I don't," replied Rollins. "I'm on the side of the fairies. I believe we none of us know what is really best for us. And a funny thing! I don't mind telling you, now I've got over it, that I was as much excited as you were, that night the wish-bone came. As I walked home I found myself wondering

what I would wish for if—— And I came to the conclusion that what I most desired above all things was to be a little taller than my wife, instead of a little shorter. Yes, that is still the one thing I am most often wishing. And think if it were possible for me to have that wish! What a waste! Absolutely boundless possibilities squandered on a silly piece of paltry personal vanity!"

"Ah!" cried Tunny. "That's just what I feel about—about other things. Riches, now. There was King Midas. We've read how everything he touched turned to gold. Though, certainly, he was a particularly abject kind of idiot. No man of brains would ask for riches in that explicit way. I, now, I'd like to have a decent competency. But then I'd rather have good health. And I'm not sure, either, that I should enjoy living up to a considerably increased income. You see, I couldn't possibly go on working for my living if I had a thousand a year. And so what should I do with my time? And, d'you know, I find I've somehow got attached to the office. I should miss coming down with you of a morning, for instance. That——"

"I'm much obliged to you for the compliment," laughed Rollins.

"Oh, I mean it," urged Tunny, earnestly. "And there are other things. Heaps. I've thought it out. Of course, I could travel about; but I'd be bound to get sick of that pretty soon. There's no place like home, after all. And there's no home—for me, at any rate—like my home in Chater Park. With a bigger income—well, I might feel dead out of everything in Belgravia, say. And yet the fact remains that I could do with a bit extra. I should like to keep a regular servant, instead of having a charwoman in twice a week. But then Enid says she hates 'generals.' And we couldn't have a full staff of domestics because Enid says she would be miserable if she didn't do all the cooking herself. Then, again, there's my boy; I'd like him to have a better start in life than I had. On the other hand, how about if, later on, he came to look down upon me? No, Rollins, whatever I wish for most, it isn't riches."

"Well, it's comforting to feel sure about that," remarked Rollins.

"It would be—if there weren't so many other things that I do want. And that's the drawback of having only one wish. I'd have riches like a shot if I could also have, say, a commanding personality, tremendous strength of mind, perfect dignity and calmness, and a profound knowledge of human nature."

Rollins masked a smile. "That certainly would be nice," he drawled.

"But then there's health—and happiness—and good looks—and—and so on."

"So that it would seem," said Rollins, "as if it were better to have no wish at all than only one."

"That's about the size of it, Rollins," Tunny assented, with a sigh. "But—but I haven't got the wish, so what does it matter?"

"I'm afraid it's beginning to matter a lot," thought Rollins, as he noted the subtle alteration in his friend. He looked haggard and pale, and perceptibly thinner. His eyes were too bright and restless. His lips seemed parched. His manner, too, had altered. His voice was peevish and thin. A frown disfigured his brow. His movements were spasmodic and uncertain, as if his nerve-centres were out of gear. Altogether he had a wilted, shrunken look, as of a man on the verge of a bad illness.

A DAY or two more passed, and the deterioration in Herbert grew rapidly more marked.

"It's no good, old chap," he said one morning, huskily. "This thing is making an old man of me. I can't keep silent about it. Do you mind if I explode?"

"The bigger the bang the better," said Rollins.

"Well," said Tunny, "one thing is sure. Whether that accursed, mummified splinter of a bird has any unnatural powers attached to it or not, there is one certainty about it: it has laid me under some sort of spell. A fortnight ago I was a happy, contented man, with hardly a care in the world. And now I'm completely miserable. I can't eat or sleep or work or play. And it's all the fault of that thing. It has set me longing. It has shown me what a poor sort of life mine is, after all. I never realized that before. I never realized how I have been crawling in a groove all the time, like a toad in a hole, never trying to get out and have a look at the world. Every day I have been mingling with all sorts and conditions of men, and every man-jack of them has been as much a mystery to me as a star is. I have never taken any account of all their many different points of view. I have been like a boy watching a circus through a hole in the tent. I have never even dimly wondered what it must be like to be one of those bigger people who take part in the real show. Those people who do things—suffer things! Those that sit in the seats of the mighty! The king, now. Any king. I suppose one could wish to be a king? What is a king's attitude towards the world? How does it feel to live with people who are always kotowing and walking backwards and prostrating themselves generally before you?

To live in an endless vista of flags and bunting, and always to have the same old tune for ever dinning in your ears? I might be a king—if there is any virtue in that old wish-bone. Or I might be a Cabinet Minister, or a leading actor, or a great singer. I might be able to write masterpieces and have my portrait in the papers. I might be a wonderful painter or musician. Or a popular idol like Charlie Chaplin. Or I might risk my life and become a hero. Practically, there need not be any conceivable limit to my legitimate aspirations—if that old wish-bone were what Ben Crocker pretends to believe it is." He was flushing painfully, and stammering and spluttering in his hysterical excitement. "And, mind you," he said, solemnly, "Ben Crocker was not what you would call a fanciful sort of fellow."

Rollins was seriously alarmed for his friend's sanity. "But surely——" he ventured.

"And look here," continued Tunny, wildly, "what right has any man to boss me and order me about as Gunnett Junior does? I've more brains than he has, I'm a bigger, better man in every way. And—and why should my wife's hands be coarse and red from housework, while other men's wives have soft white hands? And my youngsters! Why shouldn't they go to college too? Answer me that, Rollins."

And Rollins looked at him and reflected within himself: "If I answered you as I should like to, we might fall out." So he merely murmured "Ah!" sympathetically.

But that same evening a fresh side-light was flashed on the strange case of Herbert Tunny by Mrs. Rollins. She and Mrs. Tunny were close friends, and they had met that day during their husbands' absence in the City. And Mrs. Tunny had confided in Mrs. Rollins. The poor woman was in a state of deep distress. Herbert was completely changed, she said. He was surly and irritable, discontented, captious. He deliberately and maliciously forced quarrels upon her; and they had never had a serious quarrel before, since they were married. Mrs. Tunny was in despair. Her husband, she declared, had changed from a light-hearted, boyish man, affectionate, gentle, kind, and easy-going, into a sour, cantankerous misanthrope, who brooded savagely for hours together and could not speak without snarling.

"She says," Mrs. Rollins wound up, "that she is sure he is going mad."

"Yes," said her husband, thoughtfully. "Something must certainly be done about it. I think I will smoke a pipe on it, my dear."

III.

OUTCOME.

IT was six weeks later. Christmas was at hand. The air palpitated with the signs and sounds of glad, merry preparation. Everywhere the lusty, hearty heralds of the great festival were sounding their message of goodwill and peace.

A tall, bent man knocked at the door of a semi-detached villa in Chater Park, and then stood kicking the snow from his heels. The door was flung open, and a golden flood of light gushed out, falling athwart the steep steps like Jacob's ladder.

"Is Mr. Herbert Tunny within?" inquired the caller.

The figure on the threshold lent forward. "No. He is here," was the reply. "Is that my old friend Ben Crocker?"

"Guilty!" was the gruff response. "May the Lord have mercy on my soul!"

Herbert Tunny held out two welcoming hands.

"It's what I was going to say myself," said he. "But come in. Even you shall not be turned from my door on Christmas Eve."

"Even me!" growled Ben Crocker. "I like that! Haven't I returned to pay my just debts?"

"You villain!" laughed Herbert Tunny. "Never mind. Come in. I've got a friend here, but he's one of us." They were now in the parlour. "My wife is out, shopping. But there's whisky in the jar—cigars—Lordy, you ought to be ashamed to look me in the face, Ben, after the scurvy way you treated me." He was fussing about the room and chuckling. "But I'm jolly glad to see you," he said. "Rollins, lay a hand to the coal-scoop while I mix drinks. Now, you fiend in human guise, tell me what I ever did to you that you should serve me so."

"No. First, have you had your wish?" asked Ben Crocker.

"Of course I haven't," answered Tunny. "The thing was a fraud."

"How do you know that if you didn't put it to the test?"

"But I did—more fool I! And nothing happened."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure? Why, certainly I am."

"One may be sure and still be wrong. Tell me about it," said Ben Crocker.

And Tunny told his story.

But a full hour elapsed before the essential facts were elicited. First, Tunny enlarged on his speedy deterioration under the blighting influence of the wish-bone, and on the low state to which he had been reduced, bodily and spiritually, by its maleficent

"Come in. Even you shall not be turned from my door on Christmas Eve."
"Even me!" growled Ben Crocker. "I like that!"

spell. Then Mr. Rollins added his grave, impartial testimony. And so the end of the story approached and developed.

"Ah, but I was in a bad way," said Herbert Tunny. "I had never known what it was to be unhappy before. And all through that abominable charm! It was not knowing what to wish for that wrecked me. If I could only have made up my mind I might have weathered the difficulty, had my wish, and settled whether there was any virtue in the thing or not."

"But you had your wish?"

"Well, I performed all the hocus-pocus according to your instructions, if that is what you mean," said Tunny. "And, by the way, it was Rollins here who made up my mind for me at last. I was unequal to the effort—until he suggested what I should wish for. 'Wish for the best of all possible things to happen to you and yours,' was his tip. And I marvelled that I had never thought of that. It was so perfectly safe, even if the beastly thing had any power to grant my wish, though, of course, it hadn't."

"How do you know?" asked Ben Crocker.

"I'm telling you," said Tunny. "I took it out into the garden, under the moonlight. I held it in my left hand above my head. It really was thrilling—a bit uncanny. And I said, 'I wish that the best of all possible things may happen to me and mine.'" He paused. "And then," he said, slowly, "I shied the old wish-bone into the outer darkness."

"You threw it away? Why?"

"I hardly know. You see, I knew it wasn't of any further value to me personally. And—and, anyway, it wasn't pretty. And then I had got to hate the sight of it. And—and—well, to tell you the truth, I don't know why I threw it away exactly," said Tunny, in a final rush of words.

"I thought not," said Ben Crocker.

"I acted on a sort of impulse, I suppose," said Tunny. "One often does things like that, for no particular reason."

"And nothing whatever happened?"

"Nothing. I went to bed, slept like a babe all night for the first time in a fortnight, and woke up in the morning a new man. Or, rather, I was my old self again. I had a perfectly heavenly feeling of having got rid of a horrible incubus. It was as if a heavy load of black care had rolled off my shoulders. My only disquieting sensation was one of annoyance with myself for ever having given a serious thought to that wretched heathen abomination. And yet I don't mind admitting that I still felt half-expectant of something good coming to me soon. I took an unwonted interest in the postman, for instance. I wondered if my great piece of luck would reach me by his agency. You see, I hadn't the least idea as to what form the best possible thing for me and mine would take. And, again, whenever the boss called me into his private office I thought that maybe he was going to offer me a partnership in the firm—and that that was the best thing—though it didn't disappoint me much when he only gave me some usual instructions. And then, after a bit, the whole matter passed out of my mind, and I ceased to think about it any more."

HE laughed gaily. But the sun-browned traveller sat pondering.

"It's wonderful that you shouldn't see it, even yet," he said, at last.

"See what?" cried Tunny.

"Why, man, that your wish has been granted, to be sure."

"It—what? How do you make that out?" exclaimed Tunny.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us from such folly as this man's!" growled Crocker. "Didn't you wish for the best of all possible things to happen to you and yours? And hasn't that come to pass? Haven't you got rid of that wish-bone, with all its maddening, soul-killing associations? And hasn't your life rolled back into its appointed groove, and gone on, ever since, in the old placid way, as it was originally ordained that it should? Well, then! My boy, your experiment has only proved what I have always held to be the fact, that what man is he must always be. An orange-pip may propagate a whole orange-grove, but it will never produce one solitary apple-tree. And a man can only live his life on the lines laid down at the start. He may be horribly unhappy, and inferior, and dull, and dissatisfied, but he would be a worse failure still if he had the power to tinker with his sacred self and become somebody else. And that was your case, too, Herbert. The best of all possible things for you was that there should be no change in your state or condition. You wished for that to come to pass, and it has come to pass. Lucky you! You stay as you were. And I—I wished for a bonanza, and I've got it, along with a liver like a sponge. Ah!"

He sipped his whisky mournfully.

"Did you ever hear the like, now?" cried Tunny, in mock disgust. "But that's the way with all your would-be magicians. If nothing happens, 'Well,' they say, 'isn't that wonderful, now?'"

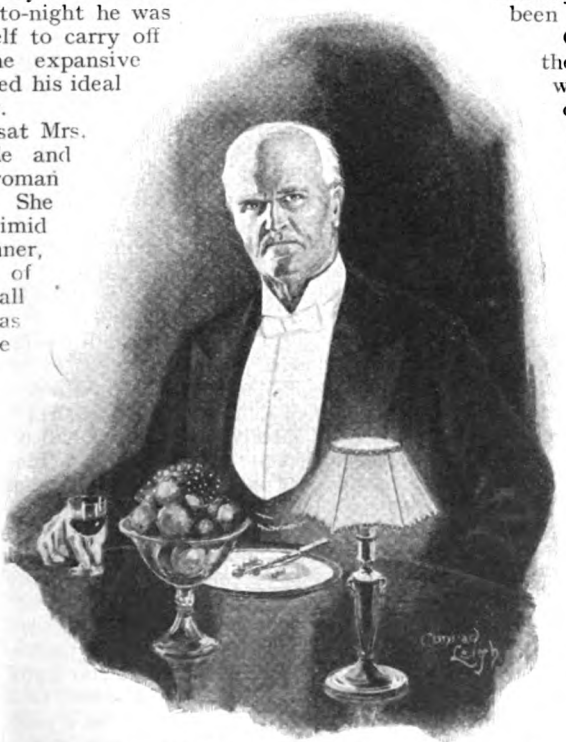
The Hyacinth

By AUGUSTUS MUIR

ILLUSTRATED BY CONRAD LEIGH

RADLETT'S was an exquisite flat; and the four guests who sat round his dinner-table took obvious pleasure in the food. A careful critic might have observed a certain flamboyance in the wines that attended the courses; but in Radlett one took a faint hint of flamboyance for granted. And to-night he was bestirring himself to carry off things with the expansive gesture that fitted his ideal of a perfect host.

On his right sat Mrs. Blakely, a pale and indeterminate woman of forty-five. She had quick, timid eyes, a shy manner, and her lack of talk, either small or intellectual, was offset by the almost blatant bursts of boldness that sometimes surprises one in nervous people. If her jewels were authentic, which was doubtful, much wealth depended on the fine jeopardy of catgut; and each time she drank, her dazzling fingers carried a fortune to her lips. Her husband, on Radlett's left, looked as if he had won his way toughly into the affluence of middle age. He had great shoulders and a heavy face that had a strange hint of hunger in repose. His easy air might have been a recent knack; it was rather too adroitly managed to have been the gift of birth.



Old William Smith was the real centre of gravity at the dinner-table.

Opposite Radlett at the round dinner-table was a girl. She had contrived to be both modern and elegant—a task which is commonly understood to demand skill. As Radlett's *fiancée* it was permissible for her friends to count her lucky; for if Radlett was not rich at the moment, he was rising fast in finance; he would assuredly be rich soon, and if not soon, then later. Radlett would undoubtedly arrive; and Evelyn Manning took obvious pride in her betrothed. With Blakely on her right she jested with the easy confidence of an old friend. But with the neighbour on her left she did not jest.

On her left sat old William Smith. William Smith was the real centre of gravity, the unobtrusive focus of thought, at the dinner-table. The meal was not exactly being served *at* William Smith, but when William Smith smiled a glow went round the group. Nor had he been openly asked by his host to sit in judgment upon the finical points that rise in the current of casual talk; but these were naturally slipped across to him, as to an oracle, for his pronouncement. William Smith might have been anything; in reality, he stood for success, success large and thoroughly well-established. A man of nearly seventy, white-haired and white-skinned, his little, snapping, bright black eyes were the only signs that he was still vividly alive and took pleasure in living. William, with his brother James, owned and controlled the firm of W. and J. Smith, Limited, one of the soundest concerns in the City of London, with interests in multitudinous enterprises that were equally sound. Their business had been built up during four decades of hard work and shrewdness, and the old apophthegm that whatever they touched had turned to gold was applied to William and James Smith with a new potency. Not that William was conservative, or averse to taking risks—James had the reputation for being, if anything, the cannier—and indeed it pleased him sometimes to plunge a little, perhaps to hearten weaker men who had not the courage of their information, or perhaps to drain a chance thrill from the lees of a lifetime of caution. But even the eccentricities of the brothers were revered; and with difficulty Radlett concealed the satisfaction he clearly felt in William Smith's first appearance at his dinner-table. It was ticklish to strike the nice mean between a simulation of bluff familiarity and a proper display of deference; but Radlett was adept at the creation of atmosphere.

"Hyacinths!" said William Smith, in a pause of talk. His old eyes winked in appreciation at a row of vases with bulbs. "Are you fond of hyacinths, Radlett?"

"Evelyn likes them," replied Radlett. "She brought me these."

William Smith was looking at them intently. "They are far on, my friend." He turned to the girl on his right. "I congratulate you, Miss Manning. Soon—soon these will be in flower."

"I think they should be beauties," assented Evelyn Manning.

William Smith's eyes closed. "I always associate hyacinths with happiness," he said, slowly. Then he peered under his thick eyebrows round the table, his small black eyes smiling a shade cynically. "It sounds sentimental drivel, doesn't it, especially from an old man? But it's true."

"Really!" Evelyn Manning turned to him with interest. The three others were still looking a trifle startled. People like William Smith weren't made for happiness, they were made for power; that William Smith, of W. and J. Smith, Limited, should avow himself a sentimentalist was intriguing.

William Smith nodded, still smiling. "It's really very simple. You see, James and I like our holidays very early in the year. As soon as spring begins, I like to get away south to the sunshine. James likes the same thing. It is the only holiday we have, that month each on the Mediterranean. But, of course, we can't both get away at the same time. The difficulty is to know who goes first."

"And how do you decide?" Evelyn's chin was on her hands. She seemed to be thrilled that the inflexible William Smith should reveal his human side. It was as if she pictured him fighting battles with men of iron, vast issues always in the balance, and now it was piquant to hear him speak with feeling of common things like happiness and holidays.

"HOW do we decide? Very simply. You see, both James and myself have rather a passion for hyacinths. At our flat we have dozens of them; we have each our own, kept separate in our own rooms. Well, we have a race with each other! Hyacinths bloom in early spring. Which of the two of us can first show a hyacinth in bloom gets first away for his holiday!"

Evelyn Manning laughed. "What a funny idea!"

"I think it's sweet," asserted Mrs. Blakely.

"And who usually wins?" inquired the girl.

William Smith shook his head sadly. "James, the rascal, has beat me for the last three years. I had a look in his room yesterday. It seems to me he's going to win again. There's one big fellow shooting out already."

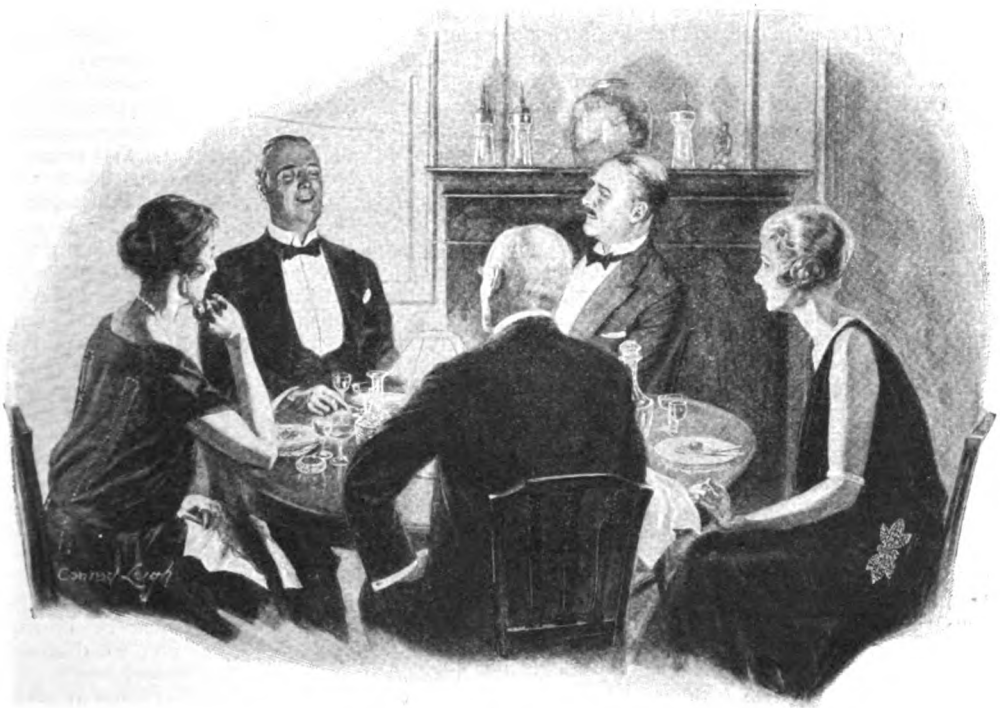
"Why don't you put some skim milk on your bulbs?" said Evelyn Manning. "I give you the tip for what it's worth. An old gardener told it to me."

William Smith nodded. "I'll have to do something. It's very unfair of James winning like that. Don't you think he ought to slip into my room some time when I'm not there, and make me a present of his leading bulb? He has won three times running, I tell you. Three times running the old scamp has sailed away and left me to do all the

work. By the time James had returned, upon my soul, I was so sick of waiting I didn't want to go away at all!" William Smith smiled. "You get like that, you know, when you're old."

"That reminds me of something," said

only link was that he was a bit of a muff and I always listened to his troubles. I met him again a few years ago—he was a mining engineer and seemed to be doing quite well. Then we lost touch till I met the Daisy again this evening at Waterloo.



Radlett lay back in his chair and laughed.

Radlett, reflectively, after a pause. At William Smith's little piece of autobiography—a vivid contrast to the tales of the hard, austere, soulless life of the brothers which sometimes appeared in the gossip section of newspapers—a gentle and friendly glow had stilled the talk. "Your mentioning the name of a flower," murmured Radlett, "recalls a curious thing that happened to me this evening. It's a different kind of flower altogether. In point of fact, a daisy. It was a fellow's nickname. A fellow I knew at school. We called him the Daisy because he was a little modest chap. He simply couldn't look after himself at all. I'm afraid we thought him a fool. . . . Thank you, yes, the ladies will have coffee in the drawing-room in a few minutes." The maid retired, leaving them to finish their dessert.

"A fool," continued Radlett, "and he always came to me for protection. We were never very friendly, mind you; the

He had just come off the boat train from Africa, and he insisted on giving me a lift in his taxi. You'd never guess what he had been doing. He had been away to examine a gold mine. A lot of cables of a contradictory sort had been coming, and he had been sent out to make an expert survey. He had orders not to send any cables or nonsense of that sort, but to come back and make his report. When he told me it was the Cordelia mine he had been busy on, I remembered right enough that the shares had been going up and down erratically. Then dear old Daisy in that taxi goes and blurts out the whole truth to me! I told him not to be a fool, but he swore I was the only man he had spoken to about it, and would be the only one before he made his report to the board. The Daisy as a kid had always told me everything, and now I suppose it all came out quite naturally."

Radlett lay back in his chair and laughed.

"'Cast thy bread upon the waters'—— Just because I was a bit decent to a miserable kid—and there you are."

Blakely's eyes were fixed on Radlett's face, as if he tried to read his thoughts. "You mean," he said in a dry voice, "this fellow told you the real truth about the mine?"

Radlett nodded. "He told me in confidence, of course. Since there are no strangers present, I don't mind repeating it in confidence. The Daisy told me that the cable about the two new reefs was true. The mine is, in fact, worth a dozen—twenty—times more than when they first started to work it! The Daisy almost took my breath away. All because I was decent to a miserable kid——"

Blakely's eyes were burning. Evelyn Manning breathed quickly, her colour had risen, and Mrs. Blakely cast quick glances at her husband. Only William Smith sat quietly turning over a fruit knife in his thin, cramped fingers. His face was expressionless and his head bent, so that his heavy eyebrows concealed his eyes.

"And what did you do about it?" said William Smith, looking up suddenly.

Radlett started. "Well, as a matter of fact, it's a very fine point. That information will be published to-morrow, and these Cordelia shares will soar. As I say, it's a very fine point of honour. Just because the Daisy met the one man in the world he could keep no secret from, I get this information in my hands half a day before another living soul."

Blakely nodded. "It's a bit of a temptation, eh? Have you—have you done anything about it, Radlett?"

Radlett took a deep breath. "I haven't. It's devilish hard. The trouble is there's still time to give instructions—I know where a big block of shares can be bought to-night. It means a fortune. What am I going to do about it? Don't ask me. I simply can't make up my mind."

"I don't see that it's dishonourable," said Blakely. "You've told Mr. Smith and myself. In confidence, I grant you. But there's nothing to prevent me, for instance——"

"Nothing whatever," retorted Radlett, "except your own conscience! The Daisy trusted me—he thought me worth the trusting. And there comes the tug."

The pause that followed grew uncomfortable. William Smith broke the silence.

"Leave it alone," he said, slowly, turning over a walnut in his fingers. "You say the Daisy trusted you. Can you trust the Daisy? It's a flutter. All gold mines are a flutter."

"I think I can trust the Daisy," replied Radlett, firmly. "He was honest when a kid. But—all the same, I don't say you're not probably right. I think you are. Things have a queer way of becoming unstuck."

Radlett tiptoed to the door, quietly opened it a couple of inches.

"Very queer," said William Smith, cracking a walnut.

"I must really apologize to the ladies," cried Radlett, recovering himself. "All this shop talk must be boring you to distraction!"

"Not at all," declared Evelyn. "I'm always keen on hearing men talk shop. It's golf-talk that bores me. Besides, we're just going for coffee."

When they had left the room, Radlett crossed to a cabinet and laid some boxes of cigars on the table.

"Thank you," murmured William Smith; "do you mind if I smoke my own cigarettes? I don't really enjoy any other. I have them

sent from Cairo. You must try them before you light your cigar. Excuse me. I have left them in my coat-pocket. Please don't trouble! I know exactly where it was put in your cloak-room."

When the door closed behind the little man, Blakely lay back in his chair and chuckled.

"You told it damn well, old fellow. Here's to the Daisy who doesn't exist!" He swallowed his liqueur at a gulp.

Radlett tiptoed to the door, quietly opened it a couple of inches, then shut it softly. He winked, and with a smile poured himself out some old brandy.

"It's all right! There's a 'phone in the cloak-room, and I heard a tinkle. The old dog is on to that brother of his, telling him to buy up a wad of the shares quick. As soon as it gets known among the punters that the Smiths are buying, these shares will go up like a rocket."

"We should both clear a packet." Blakely's heavy face lit up. "You're a bit of a genius, Radlett. I say, that little touch about your conscience was good. Have you got any?"

"Has he?" demanded Radlett, fiercely, pointing to the closed door.

IN the tiny cloak-room a white-haired old man was talking softly on the telephone: "Judson, for Heaven's sake don't let my brother know, or, 'pon my soul, I'll sack you, Judson. Yes, I've said so; do it now. Please go into my room, and pour a little skim milk over my hyacinths."

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 138.

(The Second of the Series.)

Two well-known English cities here we find.
One metal goods, one cotton, calls to mind.

1. Brush, plant, or carriage—all are like of sound.
2. A land where maid as page to duke is found.
3. Such fate bard wished for cruel English king.
4. And this hath charms—perchance you play or sing.
5. Measure, perhaps; for isle an ancient word.
6. Message or bank, in music 'twill be heard.
7. If this is flesh, then horses flesh may eat.
8. In autumn days we gather ripened wheat.
9. Where art thou, maid? In mirror should we seek.
10. To slay this beast was task of hero Greek.

PENARTH.

Answers to Acrostic No. 138 *should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor,* THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on January* 10*th.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 137.

Now comes the first, now goes the last,
How rapidly the months fly past!

1. Most foully was this monarch killed,
The witches' promise thus fulfilled.
2. A voice and nothing else was she,
This nymph of old mythology.
3. The prisoner, though he may be chained,
Here finds one letter not detained.
4. A language always found in verse,
A word that rhymes with it is worse.
5. A lady, either way the same,
Within herself has lady's name.
6. Narcissus, onion, aconite,
All of them bring our word in sight.
7. Mother of every one, to-day
She comes as daylight fades away.
8. The croquet player knows full well
The man who sank the Inchcape bell.

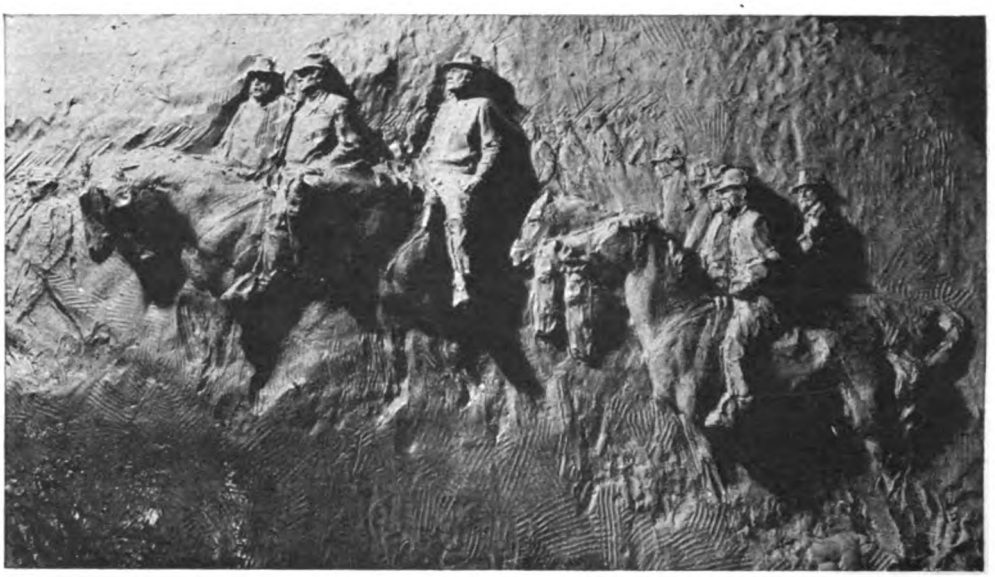
REMUS.

1. D	unca	N
2. E	ch	O
3. C	apti	V
4. E	rs	E
5. M	ada	M
6. B	ul	B
7. E	v	E
8. R	ove	R

NOTES.—Light 1. Macbeth. 3. Captive. 5. Ada.

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose a stamped addressed envelope, and he will endeavour to reply.

CARVING A MOUNTAIN



The Largest Piece of Sculpture Ever Made

By CHARLES D'EMERY

IN the steep sides of Stone Mountain—an enormous cliff of solid granite situated not far from Atlanta, in the State of Georgia, U.S.A.—a famous sculptor and his staff are at present engaged in carving and hewing the largest piece of statuary the world has ever known. It is intended to serve as a permanent memorial to General Robert E. Lee and his Confederate army, and will take anything from eight to ten years to complete.

Its size is almost beyond the grasp of imagination. The finished work will embody over a thousand marching figures—each about one hundred and forty feet high—extending more than a quarter of a mile across the face of the mountain. The leading figure, representing General Lee on horseback, is already beginning to take definite shape—indeed, although the work was only started last July, the head has already been unveiled. The magnitude of this one figure alone may be gauged from the fact that, on the occasion of the unveiling, thirty people sat down to lunch together on General Lee's shoulder! The completed figure will be higher than a sixteen-storey sky-scraper and will dwarf the rest of the world's greatest statues into comparative insignificance. The great Sphinx of Gizeh, for instance, could be completely hidden behind General Lee's head, whilst the famous Colossi of Memnon would just reach his stirrup.

It is said that when a famous scientist recently visited Stone Mountain to see the work in progress he was so impressed by the magnitude of the undertaking that he turned to a workman who was standing beside him and exclaimed: "Shades of Dinocrates! What a job!"

"You've said a mouthful," replied the

workman. "But who was this Dinocrates, anyway?"

"Dinocrates," replied the professor, "was an architect of Ancient Macedonia, who is said to have suggested that Mount Athos should be carved into a huge statue, holding in one hand a town, and in the other a basin, into which all the waters of the mountain should empty themselves. Unfortunately, his project was scorned as fantastic and impossible, and the work was never carried out."

The workman smiled.

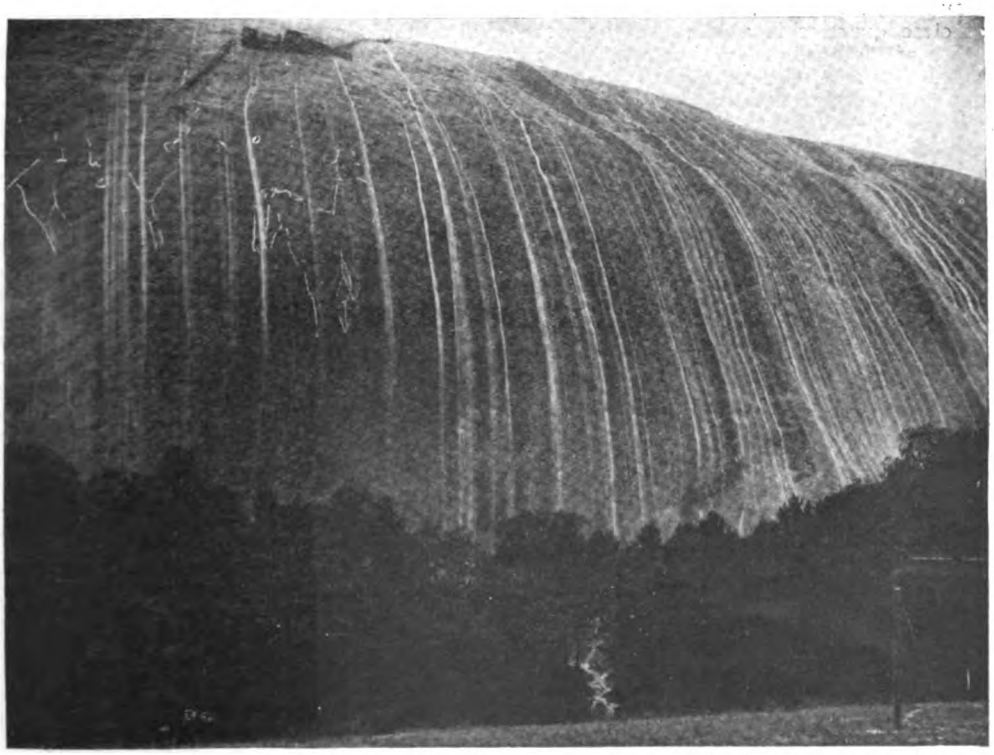
"Well," he said, "when Mr. Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor, first thought of the idea of carving this monument out of Stone Mountain a good many people told *him* it was fantastic and impossible. But he went right ahead—and I guess many of our descendants who'll never hear of Dinocrates will know the name of Gutzon Borglum sure enough."

That the monument will be a lasting one there can be no doubt, for the geologists state that the granite is so hard that erosion only takes place at the rate of one inch in a hundred thousand years.

It will be readily understood that sculpture on such an enormous scale as this calls for more than mere artistic skill and vision. It demands something of the learning of a geologist, the enterprise of an engineer, the ingenuity of an inventor, the nerve of a mountaineer, and the intrepidity of an explorer. It is one long fight against seemingly insuperable difficulties.

When Mr. Gutzon Borglum first set out to discover ways and means of carrying out his project, almost every suggestion he made was met with the word "impossible." But having made up his mind that it could be done, he was determined to see the job through, and, as the accompanying photographs witness, his dreams are already being carved into reality.

One of the first problems was to find an efficient and safe method of reaching the plane of the mountain where the work was to be started. The polished cliff rises from the valley perpendicularly for some hundreds of feet, and then curves gradually over to the summit. Climbing, therefore, was out of the question. The solution was found in the introduction of a leather rig, which



On the opposite page is shown a model of the central group in the memorial, while here is seen a partial outline of it before the carving commenced.

This photograph, taken during a heavy rainstorm, shows the hundreds of silvery cascades which pour down the face of the mountain.

buckles round a man's waist and, at the same time, provides him with a seat. Attached to half-inch steel cables, tested to a breaking point of eight tons, the men were lowered from the top by means of pulleys and winches. Their first task was to drill holes into the rock and fix iron bars into position, and by this means stairs were built on to the face of the cliff, making it possible to descend five hundred and fifty steps towards the spot where the actual carving was to be commenced.

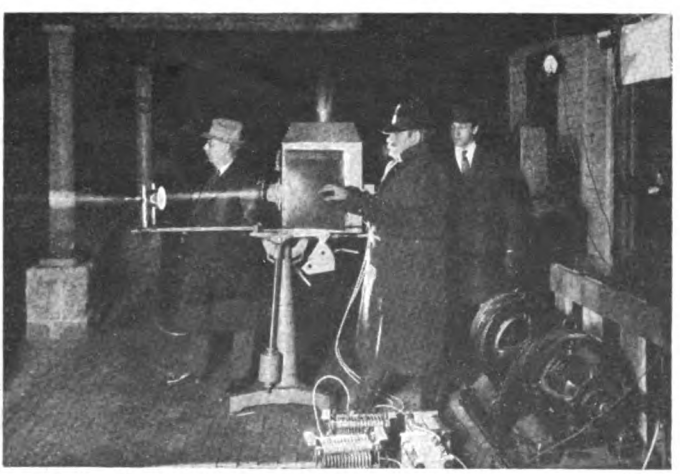
The next great problem was to find a means of tracing the design of the original clay model on to the face of the mountain. To draw an outline one must have at least some conception of form and perspective. But when, for example, the length of a horse's head—which is roughly two feet in life—becomes fifty feet on the face of the mountain, this is no easy matter. A worker at close quarters is able to see only one-tenth of the outline at a time, which means that he would require to step back some hundreds of yards into space in order to get the correct perspective.

Moreover, not only had the tracing of the outlines to be absolutely accurate, but in some places allowances had to be made for the slope of the mountain—indeed, in one or two spots it became necessary to correct an angle of fifteen degrees. How was it done ? It could, perhaps, have been accomplished by a mechanical process, laying out the mountain in small squares, and the model in a like number of squares—a square yard on the mountain representing a half-inch square on the model—but this would have entailed many years of tedious work. However, it was done in a few weeks, by a method that was as ingenious as it was successful.

Mr. Gutzon Borglum, the famous sculptor, to whose inspiration the memorial is due.

The model was first carefully photographed and a lantern slide made from the negative, with the object of projecting the image on to the face of the mountain from a distance of nine hundred feet. Here, however, another difficulty arose. Projection experts told Mr. Borglum that there was no apparatus in existence which would project a clear image such a distance. Even if a sufficiently powerful light were obtainable, they said, the heat from the electric arcs would be so great that the slide would be shattered almost instantly.

Mr. Borglum was still undaunted, and decided to make some experiments on his own estate. In these I had the pleasure of taking an active part. With a standard lantern and some old long-focus lenses we managed to project some fine hair lines to a distance of seven hundred feet. Certainly they were somewhat weak, but when we focused them with the aid of powerful binoculars we were able to get them remarkably clear. From these experiments evolved a powerful lamp, consuming one hundred to one hundred and fifty amperes. When we tried this, the first slide—as the experts had predicted—was instantly shattered by the heat. So we attached to the projector an electric blower, which forced a strong current of cold air between the slide and the condensers, and the problem was solved. Now, with this device, some of the slides last as long as two weeks, with the lamps burning several hours each night.



The giant lantern or projector used to throw on the mountain the drawing of the central group in the memorial.

Night after night the outline of the design was projected on the face of Stone Mountain, and men

Mr. Charles d'Emery, author and illustrator of this article, at work with his camera on the almost perpendicular face of the mountain.

were lowered by means of the special equipment ("bosuns' chairs," the sailors would call them) to trace the contours with a six-inch line of white paint. In tracing the outline of the two leading horsemen of the group no less than twenty-two gallons of paint were used. From our position behind the projector, the men, who were dressed in white, looked like little specks on the mountain-side. When one of them happened to get into a shadow line he became invisible. One night Mr. Tucker, the superintendent, was working on Lee's horse when he disappeared from view. Mr. Borglum telephoned to him and requested him to light his pocket electric torch. When the pin-point of light flashed out in the darkness we discovered that he had disappeared in the nostril of Lee's horse, which, of course, was a black shadow, seven feet in diameter.

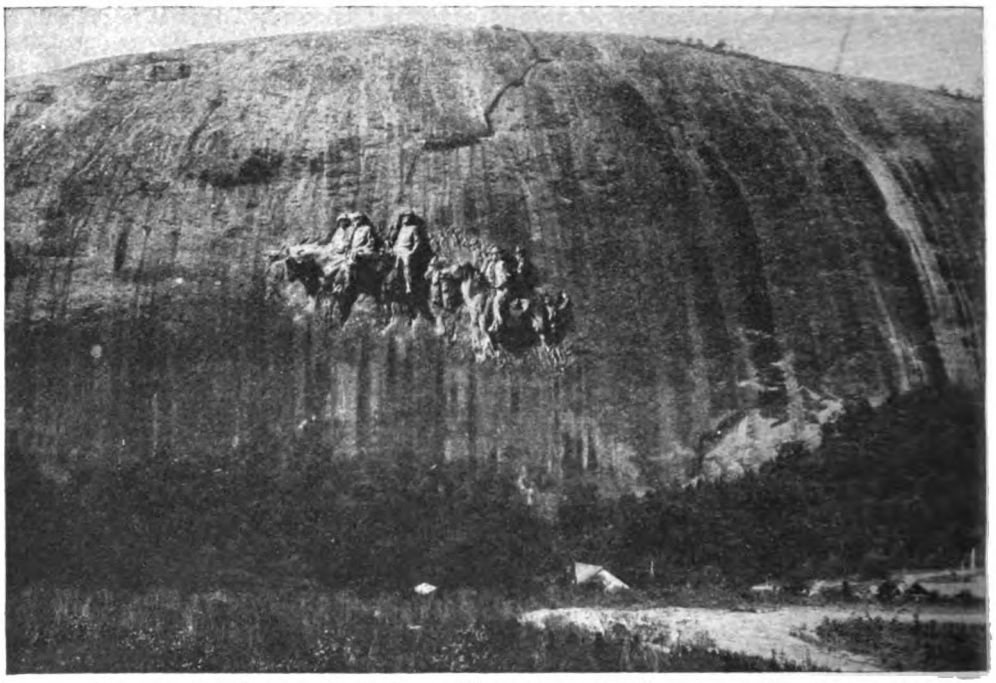
The little glass slide, measuring three and a half inches square, projects an image which is one acre in extent, and on a clear night this is so vivid that it is difficult to believe that the image seen on the mountain is not already carved there. Hundreds of people come from all parts of the country to see the world's largest statue in the making. To them the night view is the most interesting, because it enables them to get some idea of how the finished work will appear. By day they may hear the sharp reverberations of electric dril's and, after careful scrutiny, pick out the figures of the drillers as minute specks suspended against the side of the mountain, but they are unable to get near enough to the work to see how it is progressing.

Those few who are privileged to descend the face of the mountain and view the operations at close quarters, however, experience a thrill that is not easily forgotten.

I made the journey with a big stand camera not long ago, and brought back the accompanying photographs as a souvenir.

The first stage was to ascend the mountain from the right—a fairly simple climb of about one mile. The top of the mountain, for a distance of a thousand feet or so, is fenced off with barbed wire to prevent people from approaching too near the

How the cutting is done. These drillers, at work on the hat of General Lee, are suspended 500 feet above the ground.



A composite photograph of Stone Mountain as it will appear when the work of carving the central figures in the group has been completed.

danger line, and as a precaution against stones falling upon the workers below. On the crest of the mountain are a tool shed, a watchman's shelter, the air compressor for the drills, and a cooling reservoir. From here I descended some four hundred and fifty steps down the sloping side of the mountain to a large platform on which are the winches for lowering the men over the face of the mountain. I was shown the half-inch cable by which I was shortly to be suspended. Next I went to the high railings at the edge of the platform and looked down towards the valley below. Then I went back and examined the cable again!

There were still a few more steps to be descended—steeper ones this time, for the rock slopes only ten degrees at this stage. The steps appeared so foreshortened that I had the feeling that I might at any moment step off into space. However, I resisted the temptation until I reached the place where my leather "rig" was waiting, when I took my seat in the short steel chair and buckled myself in very securely. This equipment weighs about thirty pounds, and as I climbed over the rail I felt rather like a deep-sea diver—an impression which was accentuated by the many lines of hose running down the mountain side to supply compressed air to the drills. I gave the signal to lower away, and as soon as my feet touched the rock the weight of the rigging disappeared, and the rest of the descent was comparatively simple. All that was necessary was to keep control of the knees, lean outwards so that the body was balanced by the cables, and walk down backwards.

As I descended, slowly and deliberately, I noticed a dozen or more big buzzards circling about two hundred feet above me. I suddenly remembered having read, in some novel or other, of huge birds circling in the sky waiting for death to come to their prey, and I found myself wondering whether those buzzards above me had any evil thoughts of that kind—or whether they were just indulging in a little mild flying practice. Then I thought again of the cable by which I was suspended, and wondered how soon it would wear out if allowed to rub against the surface of the granite.

My morbid meditations were cut short by the sudden discovery of the fact that I had arrived at the tip of General Lee's nose. Not that it looked like a nose. It might have been his foot for all I could judge. But I knew from what I had been told that it was his nose, because just beside it was suspended a small steel cage made of two-inch angle iron. By now I was feeling quite at home, so I climbed on to this cage and erected my camera, using one of these angle

irons for two of the legs of the tripod, and a drill-hole in the tip of Lee's nose for the third. I could have used a hand camera, of course, but as I intended to take a cinema outfit down there a little later on, I thought I might just as well get used to handling big apparatus. And, by the way, now that I have the pictures, everybody insists upon looking at them horizontally instead of vertically, just because the sky is not in the usual place.

It was only when at close quarters that I was able to obtain a clear understanding of the immensity of the work. On Lee's hat, for example, I was told that there were nine thousand drill-holes—and even then it was far from complete. The holes are drilled in rows, the rows being about six inches apart, and the holes in each row being four inches from centre to centre. The rows are then connected with a cutting tool, and the stone is wedged out in pieces. Explosives cannot be used owing to the risk of destroying part of the rock which may be needed in the design. The greater part of the work will be in half relief, but, as may be seen from the sculptor's model, some portions of the centre group of figures will be in full relief. The excavation behind General Lee's horse is nearly twenty-five feet deep.

Upon my return to *terra firma* I had a chat with Mr. Tucker, who told me some

At work on General Lee's head. The model from which the work is being done is seen, encased in wood, on the right.

interesting facts concerning the many technical difficulties with which he has had to cope.

One of these was the running of an electrical power line to the top of the mountain. The power-station people refused to have anything to do with it. They pointed out that the mountain always acts as a natural lightning conductor, and that a power line on its summit would endanger their generating plant every time there was a thunderstorm. It is true that during every thunderstorm the lightning plays continuously over the polished rock. Yet Mr. Tucker fixed the cable, putting in lightning arresters, which passed all the specifications of the power people;—and never at any time has lightning caused the slightest trouble, though the line was installed several years ago.

A scale picture of the model of General Lee's head, showing the sculptor standing on the base.

During a rainstorm the mountain is a picturesque sight. From the top fall hundreds of silvery cascades, forming a glistening curtain of water, seemingly breaking the mountain into sections. When the huge monument is finished, channels will be cut in the mountain side so that these cascades will be diverted from the statuary and directed to a channel below the feet of the horses, whence it will fall like a small Niagara to the valley below.

Another example of the engineer's ingenuity is now being constructed in the form of a huge pantograph to support a movable platform, on which forty or fifty drillers can work at a time without the use of rigging. This platform will have a cantilever arrangement whereby it can be raised and lowered a distance of two hundred feet. The entire steel work will be balanced upon a central point in the face of the mountain, and when finished will look like a giant spider.

The lower section of the mountain, for a distance of four hundred feet, is concave. It falls in about eight feet from the perpendicular. A section of this at ground level will be still further hollowed out, and into the recess will be installed the most gigantic organ the world has ever seen. The rock thus shaped will form a natural sounding-board. At the base of the organ will be an amphitheatre, capable of seating forty thousand people.

The cost of this vast memorial is to be met by public subscription (half a million dollars have already been collected) and by contributions from the funds of the various Southern States. In all probability the total expenditure will amount to something like four million dollars—or over three-quarters of a million pounds.

A broad boulevard will connect the city of Atlanta, twenty miles away, and along this visitors from all parts of the globe will come to view this masterpiece of art and engineering. Thus the Stone Mountain Commemorative Memorial will go down to posterity as the eighth wonder of the world, a permanent memorial not only to the memory of General Lee and his army, but to the creative powers of the human mind and muscle.

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THE LAST SHOT

by

AUSTIN PHILIPS

ILLUSTRATED BY F. E. HILEY

BELLE ILE! The Immortal Musketeers! A score of sun-kissed coves; a hundred granite caverns! Which of these rock-bound inlets hid the most dramatic burial-place in fiction—the grotto where brave Porthos perished, made illustrious by the genius of Dumas?

THE little morning steamer from Quibéron, with its gay complement of holiday-makers, won into the fishing port of Le Palais; and the heart of at least one English passenger, as she gazed up at the frowning fortifications planned by Louis the Fourteenth's great military engineer, Vauban, beat hard and fast with high romance.

Suit-case in hand, bright eyes and quick young brain absorbing almost passionately the colourous charm and glowing atmosphere of this Breton island capital, Barbara Colyton crossed the gangway and traversed the quay to the Hôtel de Bretagne, passing—though paying but slender attention to them—a couple of waiting male compatriots. Both—though she did not notice this—glanced at her very closely and curiously. For a moment they seemed disposed to approach and speak to her. But after an eager, whispered conversation they turned back again, to see more people disembark.

Five minutes later, having booked a room and having swallowed some delicious coffee, Barbara sat studying a postcard map of the island, considering possible excursions. Once she had properly got her bearings, there seemed only a single thing to do.

The famous Cavern of Locmaria, hardly ten kilometres distant! What were a trivial dozen miles or so to a five-feet-six daughter of Devon who had covered thirty upon Dartmoor between a single sunrise and sunset? That same spirit of adventure which had brought her solitary to Brittany bade her set forth without delay.

She passed rapidly back along the quayside. As she went she re-encountered those two Englishmen, who again regarded her hard and closely. Noticing them, this time, more attentively, it seemed that they looked worried and perturbed.

The couple wheeled suddenly, caught her up, went by her, and entered the post-office. Barbara reached the top of the main thoroughfare, passed through the deep, high-vaulted red-brick opening in the lofty and immensely thick ramparts, and drew out upon the open island-uplands, wind-swept and wholly treeless, save where, here and there, the vegetation grew luxurious in combes and little valleys.

But hardly half a mile from Le Palais her impetuous passage was checked.

For right in her path stood a large group of Breton children, some jeering at, some sympathizing with, one of their number, who was sobbing bitterly.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"He has fallen and cut his knee, mademoiselle!"

Barbara pressed forward and reached the sufferer. The wound was in that spot which medical men strike sharply when they seek to test nervous reactions. It was also full of grit and bleeding badly.

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"Is there any water near here?" she demanded.

"Yes, mademoiselle. There is a pool by the wayside!" answered half-a-dozen children, all gesticulating.

Barbara took her own handkerchief, washed the wound carefully, placed the wet linen over the cut, and then borrowed a *mouchoir* of doubtful cleanliness. That, too, she washed meticulously. As, having wrung it dry, she tore it so as to be able to tie it properly over the wet compress, a car coming up from the town hooted at sight of the concourse and, reaching the group, pulled up dead.

"What's the matter?" questioned one of its occupants, who were the two men she had seen walking on the quayside.

Barbara explained. Both got out of the car, and then—quietly, kindly, and with obvious knowledge and experience—the elder of them took off the handkerchiefs, examined the wound thoroughly, re-bandaged it beautifully, and turned to the Good Samaritan.

"You know something about nursing!" he said, confidently.

"Well, I did a year's V.A.D. when I left school in nineteen-seventeen," she answered, smiling. "I've had just a little experience!"

The inquirer nodded. Then he looked at his companion. Both their faces had lighted greatly.

"You're staying in Belle Ile long?" resumed the elder, with an eagerness which he vainly strove to hide.

"About a fortnight!" Barbara answered, wondering why they should seem so excited.

"Then will you continue your Good Samaritanship and come along and do some light work for us on a yacht in the harbour at Sauzon? My friend here wants to perform an urgent and important operation, and the nurse we had sent for has disappointed us, owing to the illness of a relation. We have wired for another, so that it will only be for three days or so that we shall need to trouble you."

Barbara stood hesitant for some moments, regarding the two men doubtfully, remembering all the awful stories and many warnings which she had received before starting. At scarcely twenty-four one is not necessarily a first-class judge of character, but, to her unpractised eye at any rate, the face of the elder man—burned brown as mahogany—seemed kind and friendly; while as for his companion—well, it was an entirely different matter. He and she had exchanged glances. Instantly she had known that he admired her. Instantly, also, she was aware that something in him, body, soul, or brain—and which of these was yet quite uncertain—called to her tremendously, overwhelmingly.

And still she did not answer. One inward monitor whispered "Go!" Another—perhaps but the timid auxiliary of a fear-complex—whispered "Don't go!" Then, with staggering penetration and frankness, the younger man—lean and long-fingered—put her own inmost thoughts into words.

"Well, do you suspect us?" was his quiet question.

"No, I don't!" she answered immediately, conquered—for good or ill—by a voice so beautiful that it drew like a bow upon her heart-strings. "I shall be very pleased to come and help you!"

"Thank you! Thank you!" said the elder man, swift to grasp at, and to act upon, acquiescence. And in another fifteen seconds Barbara was sitting in the car.

FIRST of all the child was carried to the cottage of its mother, half a mile distant. Then Barbara's suit-case was collected. After that the car ripped away at a great pace towards Sauzon on a surface-perfect military road.

It dropped on to lower ground presently, running for awhile along the shore of a sunlit estuary in which a beautiful white yacht lay at anchor.

"That's the *Maritzburg!*" said the elder man as the car stopped before the principal inn of the second-sized place in the island. "And there is our launch. Let us stroll down to it while my friend takes our hireling back into garage!"

Barbara acquiesced, sitting down to wait happily, dabbling her fingers delightedly in the warm and Gulf-Stream-influenced water, looking up at the hillside crowned with villas. Not a qualm, not a doubt now possessed her. Here indeed was romance, a real holiday—and, best of all, a chance of doing good!

The younger man arrived now. As the launch cut its way to the yacht, Barbara sat considering her two companions, telling herself how delightful they were, how utterly different from the stuffy people in cathedral Belboro, how much more they were like her father—a rising King's Counsel who had died a couple of years ago and left her quite comfortably off but in charge of his only sister, a hyper-pious woman who adored her and who happened, luckily, at this moment to be away in Cumberland with relations.

The launch reached the *Maritzburg*. Hardly had Barbara climbed its ladder when her joy and trust received a shock.

For beside another exceptionally sunburned person, who was introduced to her as the captain, stood two barefooted men

"You know something about nursing!" he said, confidently.

wearing white trousers and white tunics, one of them having a broad red sash over one and under the other shoulder. As the latter took charge of her suit-case, she knew a genuine thrill of fear.

But it was ridiculous! she told herself, speedily. Lots of people had native servants nowadays—and perhaps these two doctors were from India. Certainly his complexion indicated that the elder of them came from the tropics.

"Lunch in ten minutes, when the bugle is blown, missie!" said the sashed man—whose name she had already heard was Charlie—as he showed her into her stateroom. And something in his smile—perhaps, indeed, something which her own eagerness to think all was well put there!—contributed to take away affright.

Later she found her way to the saloon. Charlie and the other native waited; and the food was as good as any she had ever tasted. Yet all the same the meal was very trying. She was affected—affected past all explanation—by the personality of the younger doctor.

It was not, somehow, because he was so striking-looking or because, even, his features displayed marked and determined character. Rather was it that he aroused such an amazing—indeed, such a perfectly terrifying—combination of emotions in her; and she was conscious (in addition to admiration and the strongest possible sense of being attracted) of an immense protective tenderness towards him, as though she were involuntarily drawn to help him in all his deeds and undertakings.

She felt on tenterhooks lest she should show what she was feeling. Evidently, though, she quite concealed it—for the two men chatted most naturally about Bretons, Brittany, and boating. Still, she was truly thankful when the meal ended and they went up on to the deck.

When coffee had been drunk and cigarettes consumed (Barbara declined both, feeling it, though needless, sounder judgment), the elder man turned to his colleague.

"I think we had better be making ready!" he said, quietly. "By now Charlie will have got the place cleared. "Will you go and prepare things while I introduce Miss Colyton to the patient?"

The younger man acquiesced and left them. Her companion motioned to Barbara to follow him farther forward.

THERE he opened the door of a cabin. Barbara found herself standing before a berth.

In it a boy was lying, sixteen years old or thereabouts, brown-haired, having well-marked features and eyes which would have been fine but for their extraordinary expression of lethargy, which indeed was the note of this whole young being, who might (so it struck her) have been recovering from the influence of some baneful drug. He was lying propped up on pillows, and Barbara noticed immediately that one of his arms was twitching and that underneath the bedclothes a foot seemed jerking strangely.

"This is my nephew, Richard!" said her companion, whose name she had already learned was Conway, while his colleague was called Llewellyn. "Richard, this is Miss Colyton!"

The boy put out a limp hand indifferently and muttered something dully—and indeed hardly coherently.

"Miss Colyton has come to help you to get well, Dickon," went on his uncle. "How are you feeling now, old man?"

"My eyes ache. So does my head—and I feel sick and giddy!"

"Poor old chap! Well, we'll soon have you right now!"

Barbara lingered sympathetically, speaking a few more words to the sick boy, who appeared quite uninterested in anyone. Then after a moment or two Dr. Conway led her on to the deck again.

"He is very ill?" she asked as soon as they were out of earshot of the cabin.

"Yes, but by no means incurably. I have every hope that the operation which we are going to perform will restore his health completely. Now, will you please go down into the saloon and tell Llewellyn to send up Charlie as soon as he is ready?"

Barbara obeyed unquestioningly, eager to be of service to the patient. Yet as she descended the staircase she could not help wondering why—when England could be reached in two days' steaming—it should be in any way imperative to perform this operation in the narrow confines of a yacht.

But as she entered the saloon all thought of wrongness went from her—so wonderfully transformed was everything. The place had suddenly become an operating-theatre. Drums of dressings were on the sideboard, instruments lay ready inside a sterilized towel, rubber gloves and white coat awaited her wearing; and Dr. Llewellyn, calm, strong, and efficient, told her exactly what to do.

She saw him touch the bell presently and Charlie answer it instantly.

"Ask Dr. Conway to bring down Mr. Richard!" came the order.

After a brief interval the uncle entered, carrying his nephew, dull and quite indifferent to what was happening. A minute or two later the boy was lying on the central dining-table with a wire mask upon his face, unconscious by reason of the anæsthetic which the elder doctor had administered.

Barbara, with quick-beating heart, saw Llewellyn take up his instruments one after the other, first lay back the skin, then pierce the skull, and after that—still wholly cool, utterly decisive, and without the least hesitation or hurry—take up a forceps. At last, her eyes glued to his lightest action, she heard him utter just one word, "Innocent!" and saw Conway nod in answer, with what seemed vast relief.

She helped to hand swabs and dressings, and saw Llewellyn himself bear back the boy to his cabin, and then herself remained watching till Richard glimpsed back again to consciousness. Evening came. Night came. Save for an hour at dinner, she did not leave him for one instant. She watched vigilant there till daybreak, while from time to time the doctors came to question her and to see how the patient was doing.

Yet all the time—and amidst all her devotion to her task and her pleasure at helping humanity—a man's strong personality was obsessing her. More than once—preposterous as it might be—she had the feeling that she was standing on the edge of a precipice, and that on this yacht was some mystery, and that things were not wholly what they seemed.

THREE days passed, superb and full of sunshine; days in which Barbara nursed, rested, talked, walked, and sat long hours upon deck with the younger doctor who had such power over her; while a change, altogether extraordinary, came

over Richard. His uncle and Llewellyn seemed delighted. Though he was still naturally in pain, the boy's mentality was altered. There were no more twitchings of foot and arm.

" Miss Colyton," said Conway on the third morning, " we are really very indebted to you for another long night's vigil. You must go and lie down after breakfast. I will look after Richard all this morning. The nurse from England is due here about tea-time. But I do hope you will honour us by remaining on board for a day or two."

Barbara nodded, yet said nothing. She did not know quite what to answer. Then —her heart beating fiercely—she heard Llewellyn clinch his senior's invitation.

" Yes, do stay, Miss Colyton," he begged, in that wonderful, quiet, strong voice of his.

" You really want me to ? "

" Yes, of course. Don't we, Conway ? "

" Oh, rather ! Only I don't want to keep her here against her will and spoil her holiday."

Barbara looked from one to the other. She looked longer at Conway than at Llewellyn. But she looked long enough at the latter to see a whole dozen things in just one single second. His eyes begged, commanded—and compelled.

" I will stay on for a couple of days with pleasure," she answered presently, as one succumbing to the inevitable.

" Splendid ! And, I say, won't you have a dip before breakfast ? "

She accepted very readily. She had brought a costume in her suit-case. Speedily she was diving from the ship's ladder, revelling in the warm, delicious water and in Llewellyn's laughing companionship—living keenly and intensely as she had never yet lived in this world.

After breakfast she went to her cabin. But sleep was simply impossible. Her whole being seemed to thrill. She felt upon the edge of something wonderful. Presently she tried to sleep no more, but rose and walked out along the deck.

In a chair beneath an awning she saw Llewellyn. Eagerly he rose and found another. Side by side they sat in silence watching the many-hued estuary. Belle Ile, Porthos, the Cavern of Locmaria—all were forgotten by Barbara at this moment in this real romance of her own.

" You haven't had a very long rest," her companion said to her, suddenly.

" No. I couldn't sleep. I—I didn't really want to."

" You weren't upset by that operation ? "

" Not one bit. I hope I wasn't too futile."

" No ; you helped us both tremendously. Conway was delighted with you. By the way, whereabouts do you hail from ? "

" I told you. The West Country—Belboro."

" But before that ? "

" London."

" And before that also ? "

" I don't understand you."

" Don't you ? We've met somewhere."

" Have we ? "

" Yes—centuries ago ! "

There was a pause—a long period of silence. Then that deep, low voice—of whose power over his companion this man seemed so utterly unconscious—softly and musically quoted two beautiful lines from Emile Verhaeren :—

" O, toi, la neuve ! O, toi, l'ancienne !
Qui vins à moi des bords d'éternité ! "

At his words a great thrill ran all through Barbara's young being. Her head trembled imperceptibly. In her eyes was a great wonder, and also a great dawning happiness. He, too, was feeling what she was. He, too——

Before she could speak or recover herself someone came towards them, ushered by the quartermaster.

It was a Bretonne girl who had that moment come aboard with a telegram. Llewellyn tore it open. Then with a quick " Excuse me ! " he hurried into Richard's cabin and came out again with Conway.

" Miss Colyton," began the elder man, " the other nurse we sent for has also disappointed us. Will you continue to assist us ? We have, unfortunately, another operation to perform on Richard as soon as ever he is well enough. We will, of course, arrange for your remuneration."

" Why, yes, certainly. But——"

" Yes, Miss Colyton ? "

" You must let me go into Le Palais this afternoon. I have a number of purchases to make there—things I hadn't room for in my suit-case."

The two men glanced at each other instantly ; and to her immense surprise Barbara saw what seemed like marked reluctance in both their faces.

But whatever they felt, it did not seem to influence their decision. For, smiling, Dr. Conway said :—

" Why, certainly, Miss Colyton. We will arrange to have you driven. I myself would go with you, but unfortunately I shall be busy all the afternoon with arrears of correspondence—and my colleague must look after Richard."

BUT Barbara walked into Le Palais. She gave the reason that she needed exercise. In actual fact she ached for solitude, to be at one with elementals and to think.

And always, as she strode that long highway which ran treeless over the island grasslands, she kept asking herself a single question, which she answered sometimes one way, sometimes another. "Does he, does he feel what I am feeling? Was he sincere in what he said? Was he merely flirting or did he mean it? And did he—oh, did he have that strange sensation which I had when we first looked into one another's eyes?"

She reached the town and made her purchases. Not wishing to seem too eager to get back, she lingered a little, watching the incoming afternoon boat from Quibéron, and also a Nantes boat which was still a little distant. Among the passengers in the former was a lean-faced, parchment-skinned man whom she immediately placed as a compatriot—just as he, too, obviously placed her, also.

"You are English!" he said, coming up to her after first staring at her fixedly.

"Yes!" she answered, surprisedly.

"Have you been in the island long?"

"Three days only!"

"Then you don't happen to know if there is a yacht here belonging to a doctor called Conway?"

"Why, certainly there is—at Sauzon, a few miles off. Can I tell the owner anything about you? Are you waiting to consult him?"

"Consult him!"

A spasm of fury convulsed the stranger's face for a second or two as he stood regarding Barbara with what seemed to her to be immense hostility and suspicion. Then he seemed to pull himself together.

"Did you know this man Conway before you came here to Belle Ile?" he asked, with an effort at casual indifference.

"No; we only met by chance, and as he learned that I had some slight knowledge of nursing he asked me to go on board the yacht——"

"To assist in an operation?"

"Yes."

"Then you are involved in a serious and terrible crime, young woman!"

"A crime!"

"Yes, most assuredly a crime. Dr. Conway is a notorious vivisectionist, and I came here to prevent my poor nephew, Richard Grafton, from being tortured. The nurse this brute sent for was on the St. Malo boat, and I got into conversation with her, suspecting where she was going, and when I had warned her she very wisely wired, cancelling her agreement, and went home straight away to England, leaving me to come on here and rescue my poor nephew from the inhuman villain's clutches. Now, I am not going to let you go back to that yacht again!"

The man looked round, as though he were seeking for a gendarme. Then, seemingly changing his mind, he bent and put his face so close to Barbara's as to make her take a quick step back from him.

"You are on foot!" he said, pointing to her slung rucsack.

"Yes."

"Then I shall be there before you are—no, I am going to get a car and shall catch you up and take you with me. I shall treat you as a witness, not as an accomplice, unless you try to thwart me. Go up the hill and wait for me at the top of it while I call and see the authorities!"

He rushed into the gendarmerie, obviously in the wildest of hurries. Barbara stood *plantée* on the quayside. Her world rocked and reeled. Her hopes and dreams were now as nothing. Her worst suspicions—those which she had put aside from her as preposterous—had all been most terribly justified. These two men, her hosts, whom she had assisted in this lawless operation, were soulless, diabolically bad.

Recovering herself swiftly, she felt that inaction was simply impossible to her. A moment later, forgetful of the man in the gendarmerie, she was striding hotfoot up the hill.

Hell went with her—Hell and bitter anguish and self-reproach at having involved herself in a business so disgraceful. Better—oh, how many times better!—to have had less spirit of adventure and to have contented herself with seeing the Cavern of Locmaria, than to have met Charles Llewellyn and found him base and unscrupulous.

Charles Llewellyn! Even as the name, though unspoken, vibrated throughout all her tortured being, that amazing mystical feeling which she had for him—that sense of possession and protectiveness—bade her seek to save him from imprisonment. With the wish came the method. She would get to him ere this parchment-skinned Nemesis and his car, and would tell him she knew all, demand Richard, deliver him to his rightful guardian, while the *Maritzburg* steamed out to sea.

She reached the ramparts, passed them, came on to level ground, and then started running, hardly pausing (she *could* run, luckily!) save to look round to see if any car was coming. She arrived at Sauzon without incident. As the launch which had come to meet her touched the yacht's ladder, she ran lightly up to the deck. There the two doctors were sitting, chatting. Both rose and stared in amazement at the terror, grief, and countless mixed emotions written

upon their acting-nurse's features.

"What on earth's the matter, Miss Colyton?" asked Llewellyn in that wonderful voice of his, which still had the same power over Barbara, though she knew him now a villainous torturer of human beings.

"The matter!"

She spoke swiftly, briefly, telling them of her encounter in Le Palais and the revelation of their real characters, and of the imminent descent of the gendarmes on them. "Get up steam instantly!" she ended. "Give me Richard. I will deliver him safe to his uncle and legal guardian. Fly—though you don't deserve mercy. Fly, while you still have the opportunity!"

The two men heard her in deadest silence. When she had finished they exchanged glances. After that they stood looking at her in frankest admiration. And then Dr. Conway made reply.

"Miss Colyton," he began. "I thank you on behalf of myself and my colleague for giving us this chance of escaping. But we simply cannot take it—unless we take Richard with us. You have been misled utterly. We are not vivisectionists. We are here on an errand of mercy!"

"An errand of mercy!"

"Yes. One in which you have very greatly assisted us. I am not now in medical practice, and I am a member of the South African Legislature, home on a brief trip to Europe; and I went to see my sister's son Richard, at Fowey, in Cornwall, where he lived with his late father's brother, a solicitor called Grafton, who had been foolishly left in sole charge of the child and his money, and who is

Speedily she was diving from the ship's ladder, revelling in the warm, delicious water.

heir to the property should the child predecease him. And I found that this man was slowly murdering Richard!

"Yes, Miss Colyton—murdering him literally and systematically, first making him an idiot. As soon as I got home I saw the boy had a tumour on the brain—you may have noticed how his arm and foot twitched prior to the operation—indeed, at first I feared tubercular meningitis, but the thing had gone on too long for it to be that, fortunately. I did my damnedest to persuade Grafton to have Richard operated on. He refused absolutely, and got a local doctor to support him by saying that the patient's general health would not stand the shock at present—and he refused point-blank to call in any specialist. I am the child's godfather, Miss Colyton. I had, though, no *locus standi*. Then—as swift insanity seemed certain—I took my yacht into the Fowey estuary and kidnapped the boy in a launch from the lawn where he was lying by the waterside. The rest you know already. Not being a surgeon myself, I arranged for Llewellyn to be aboard the *Maritzburg*, to operate. He is a brilliant fellow—he was Ettles scholar of his year at Edinburgh—and I am going to take him out to the Union, where a great career lies before him, with his brains and my backing."

"B-but the second operation!"

"Adenoids, merely. They are bad, exceedingly, and will have to be removed as soon as possible. Now, I think that is everything. You find yourself satisfied, Miss Colyton?"

Barbara stood considering the speaker. Then she stood looking at Llewellyn. And her heart told her surely that she could trust both—and love one without dishonour—and she thrust out young and generous hands.

"Yes, yes. I am satisfied, and I believe you, and I'll help you right to the end!" she said, eagerly. "But what are you going to do? This devil is putting the gendarmes on you!"

"Get up steam and make for the Azores. And there——"

DR. CONWAY stopped dead. All three turned round simultaneously. Even as they had been talking a boat must have come alongside, for shouts became audible and the captain was calling down to someone, and then faces appeared, hot and hostile, and five men came along the deck.

One of them was Richard's murderous guardian. The others were a *sous-officier* of gendarmes and two of his underlings, and the last was a Customs House official. Grafton rushed up to Conway and pointed him out to his followers.

"Where is my ward?" he cried. "Where is the child you villains have been inhumanly vivisecting?"

Then, without waiting for an answer, the solicitor from Fowey began to hurl abuse, to demand the boy, to appeal violently to gendarmes and *douanier*, speaking French which was perfectly understandable, although pronounced most execrably. Conway's French—like his surgery—was negligible. But Llewellyn took up the cudgels, putting the English point of view.

"You have no jurisdiction," she heard him saying firmly. "This is an English ship."

"And these are French waters."

"But I repeat that you have no jurisdiction in this matter."

"I say we have!" The *sous-officier*—like all minor policemen in all climes and countries—aching for a case and *réclame*, meant to win promotion out of this one. "Where is the child you have been crucifying? Jules, call for aid from those fishing vessels."

The Customs man hurried to hail half-a-dozen neighbouring sardine-boats. The yacht's crew crowded round now. Grafton continued his abuse.

"You shall go to jail for this, damn you!" he cried. "And this girl also, your accomplice. Where is Richard? Where is my nephew, Richard?"

He raised his rasping voice loudly. But Richard, fortunately, could not hear him, for his ears were covered by the head-bandage; and Barbara had already slipped away to lock the door of his cabin. Matters looked really ugly now, though. Several fishing-boats were approaching rapidly, and the *douanier* was giving them his version.

Then, quietly, calmly, a man stepped up to the disputants. He had come aboard, evidently, from a rowing-boat.

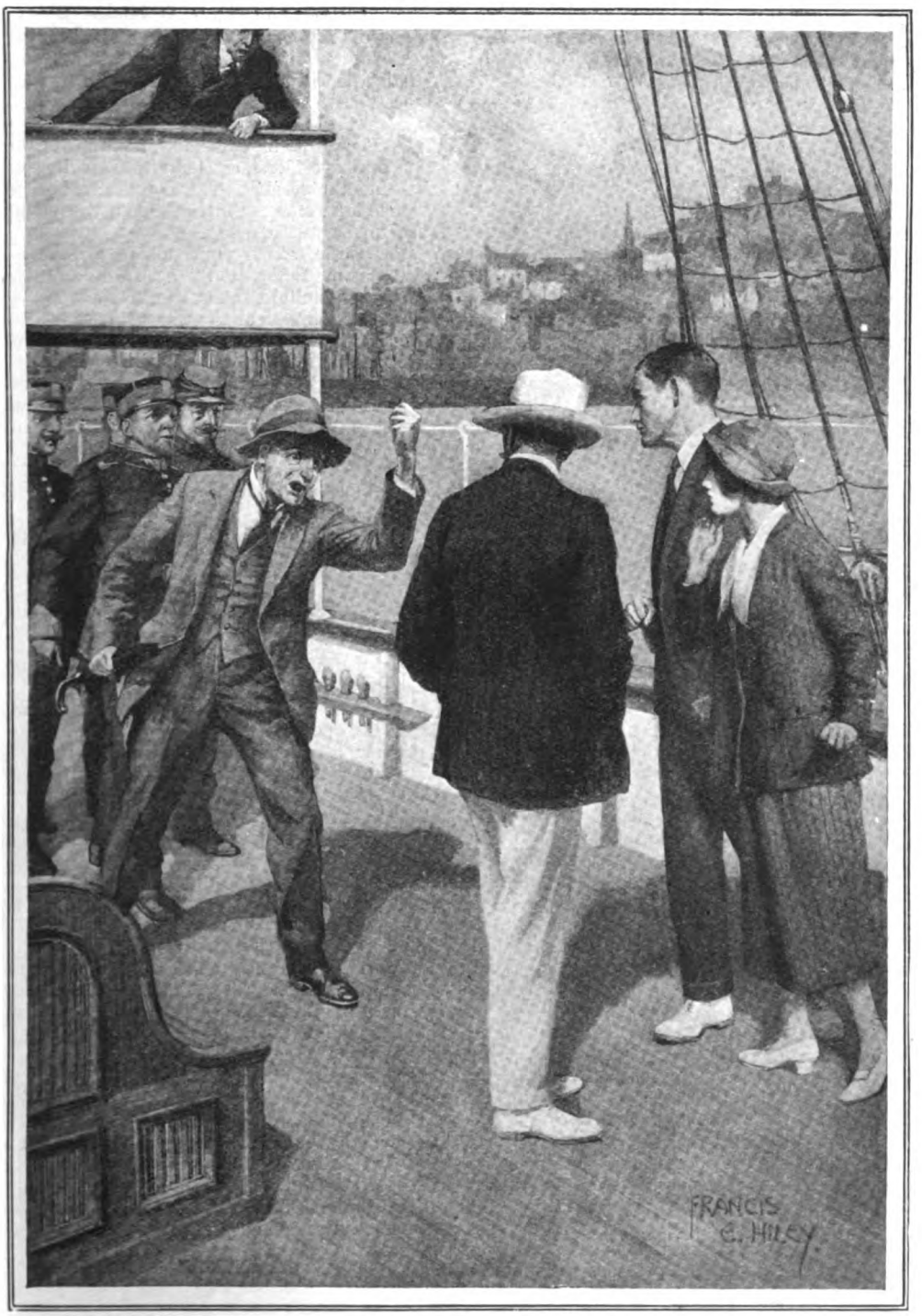
"Who is the owner of this vessel?" he asked, in French so polished and distinguished that, though he was obviously an Englishman, the Frenchmen turned instantly to listen to him.

"Dr. Conway of Cape Town is!" answered Llewellyn, pointing to the South African legislator.

"And which is Mr. Grafton, of Fowey?" pursued the other, looking round the excited company.

No one replied for a moment. The speaker, however, had already answered his own question by identifying the solicitor: first, doubtless from some memorized description, and secondly because that gentleman was now seeking — very unsuccessfully — to moisten a dry tongue with drier lips.

In a flash the new-comer had taken a



"Where is my ward?" he cried. "Where is the child you villains have been inhumanly vivisecting?"

couple of steps forward and had touched the man upon the shoulder.

"My name is Stanton. I am a detective-inspector attached to Scotland Yard," he said—and shoved a passport into the hands of the *sous-officier*. "George Reginald Grafton, I hold a warrant for your arrest on a charge of 'forgery and fraudulent conversion of trustee accounts.' Dr. Conway!"

"Yes, Mr. Stanton!"

"I remember you very well as a loyal British citizen in Kimberley, where I did sentry duty in my Army days outside your residence, just after General French relieved the city. I want you to be loyal still, and to help to save time and money which would be wasted in extradition proceedings if we took the prisoner ashore—and to be so obliging as to give him and me a passage 'on English ground' back to Falmouth or Plymouth. Now, I don't exactly know what your trouble is with all these French gentlemen—but if you'll kindly just enlighten me a little, why, I fancy I can soon put it all right."

A few hours later the *Maritzburg* was steaming due westward along the southern mainland of Brittany through a sea which the moon washed to silver, while the light-house of Ste. Guénolé swept the placid waters with immense pencils of light.

Richard was in his cabin—and sleeping peacefully. Grafton was in another—locked there. In a deck-chair Detective-Inspector Stanton was listening to the story of the trephining and the saving of a boy's brain and life.

"Well, I don't know that Grafton can be punished for his inhumanity," he said, presently. "The law, as at present constituted, lets a father or a guardian work his will on children, one way or another, without any interference. But, personally, I think he's a damned sight worse than many actual murderers—and I congratulate you very heartily on your achievement, gentlemen—though you did sail a bit close to the wind, and no error! You, and the bank manager who reported what he was doing with trust accounts—and my catching that Nantes boat by the skin of my teeth when I'd missed the Quibéron connections—have managed to make the last desperate shot of a scheming villain miss its target—and of course, if he *had* inherited the child's money, he wouldn't have gone where he's going when he gets back home to England. Now I'll wish you good night. Not that I shall get much sleep till I've lodged Grafton safely in Exeter Prison!"

The detective strolled away. Dr. Conway remained a little longer. Then he, too, departed. Barbara and Llewellyn were alone.

THE yacht moved forward on a calm and even keel, as though magically and machinelessly. The couple sat on in silence for some minutes. Then the young surgeon began to speak.

"So we're taking you back to England—away from Belle Ile!" he said, quietly; and the moonlight made visible the smile of happiness on his lean, distinguished features.

"But by my own express wish!" his companion answered. "I want to see Richard right through his convalescence, and to attend him during that coming operation. You are going to do it personally?"

"Yes. Conway specially wishes me to!"

"And then you will go out with him to South Africa?"

"I expect so. He has promised to find me a big opening there, and he is a man who is most loyal to his friends, and with immense influence in the Union!"

Barbara nodded understandingly. Then yet another silence followed. Llewellyn broke it, as he had but now broken its predecessor.

"You are sorry to leave the little island?" came his opening.

"Very!" she answered, her heart beating fast and yet happily; and all anxiety and doubt now utterly absent from her.

"For any particular reason?"

"Yes. For a very, very special one!"

"Why, what is it?"

"That my mission is unfulfilled—that I haven't done what I came to do—that I've failed to see the Cavern of Locmaria, the tomb of Porthos, my pet hero!"

Llewellyn laughed most musically. And then, a moment later, the moon ceased shining—hidden altogether for the moment by a bank of heavy black clouds.

"We will come back and look at it together, darling, before we go South, to settle!" Barbara heard him say in that voice of his which moved her so wonderfully, and which would have made her gladly follow him to "the world's remotest rim" had he cared to ask her.

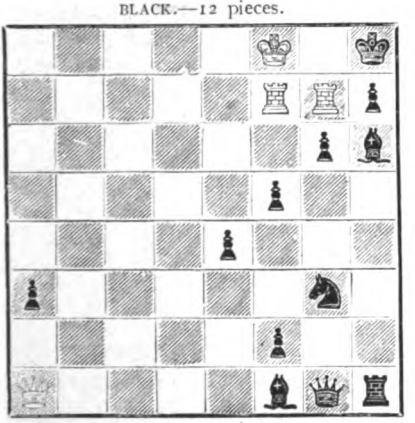
And then, a second later—happy, infinitely happy—she found herself lying in his arms.

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

729.—A CURIOUS CHESS PUZZLE.

BLACK.—12 pieces.



WHITE.—4 pieces.

White to play and win.

HERE is a delightful example of humour on the chessboard. It comes from America and is an invention of those well-known problemists, Shinkman and Wurtzburg. The trouble is that a White rook is pinned by Black's bishop, or it would be mate on the move. If the White king moves on black squares, Black threatens perpetually to check it with one of his bishops. If White does anything else Black will have time to develop his other bishop, and then White will certainly not win.

730.—WORD RINGS.

THE little pastime that I suggested, called "Word Chains," seems to have proved exceedingly interesting, and a correspondent (Mrs. H. N. V.) now suggests the following variation. Find three four-letter words like M E A N—A N N A—N A M E, where the first two letters of each successive word are the same as the last two letters of the previcus one, the first word following the third, so as to complete the ring. Here is another example, S T E M—E M M A—M A S T, but I propose to bar all Christian names and proper nouns. How many such rings can you construct with familiar dictionary words? The ideal solution will be one in which the three words, read in succession, convey some meaning.

731.—DIFFERENCE SQUARES.

CAN you rearrange the nine digits in the square so that in all the eight directions the difference between one of the digits and the sum of the remaining two shall always be the same? In the example shown it will be found that all the rows and columns give the difference 3 (thus 4 + 2—3, and 1 + 9—7, and 6 + 5—8, etc.), but the two diagonals are wrong, because 8—(4 + 1) and 6—(1 + 2) is not allowed: the sum of two must not be taken from the single digit, but the single digit from the sum. How many solutions are there?

4	3	2
7	1	9
6	5	8

No. 732.—A CHARADE.

MY *first*, by man invented, is
An article in common use;
My *second* (very harmless word),
To call himself none will refuse;
My *third*, the reader, there's no doubt,
Will wish to cross, whate'er his views;
My *whole* is but an isle; a welcome spot,
Where oarsmen linger when the day is hot.

The Major's Christmas Puzzles—Solutions.

JOHN AND MARY.

JOHN is aged 26⅔ years and Mary 20. When John was 20, Mary was 13⅓, and when John is 33⅓ Mary will be 26⅔.

THE DAMAGED ENGINE.

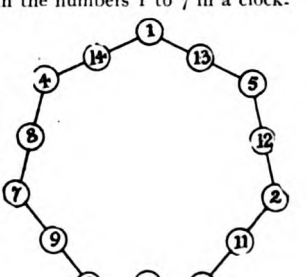
THE distance from Anglechester to Clinkertown must be 200 miles. The train went 50 miles at 50 m.p.h. and 150 miles at 30 m.p.h. If the accident had occurred 50 miles farther on, it would have gone 100 miles at 50 m.p.h. and 100 miles at 30 m.p.h.

BURIED FRUITS.

THE twelve fruits, in their order, are Fig, Date, Apple, Peach, Nectarine, Melon, Pear, Orange, Olive, Gourd, Lemon, and Raisin.

A HEPTAGON PUZZLE.

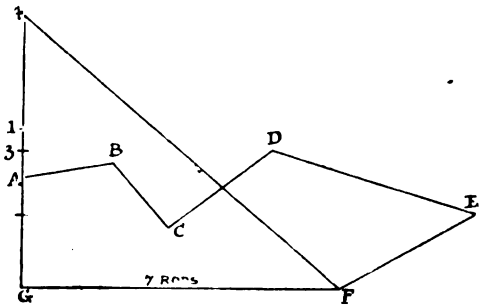
THE diagram shows the solution. Starting at the highest point, write in the numbers 1 to 7 in a clockwise direction at alternate points. Then, starting just above the 7, write 8 to 14 successively in the opposite direction, taking every vacant circle in turn. If instead you write in 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, and then 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, you will get a solution with the sides adding to 22 instead of 19. If you substitute



for every number in these solutions its difference from 15 you will get the complementary solutions, adding respectively to 26 and 23 (the difference of 19 and 22 from 45).

A PROBLEM FOR SURVEYORS.

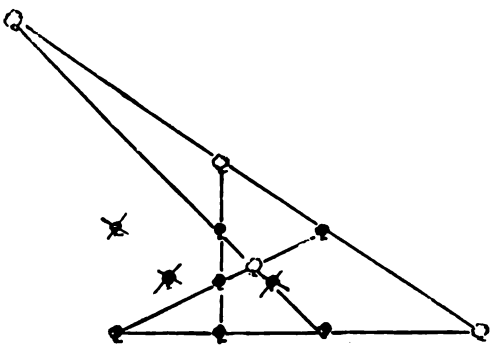
A RECTILINEAR figure of any number of sides can be reduced to a triangle of equal area, and as A G F happens to be a right-angle the thing is quite easy in this way. Continue the line G A. Now lay a parallel ruler from A to C, run it up to B and mark the point 1.



Then lay the ruler from 1 to D and run it down to C, marking point 2. Then lay it from 2 to E, run it up to D and mark point 3. Then lay it from 3 to F, run it up to E and mark point 4. If you now draw the line 4 to F the triangle G 4 F is equal in area to the irregular field. As our scale map shows G F to be 7 inches (rods), and we find the length G 4 in this case to be exactly 6 inches (rods), we know that the area of the field is half of 7 times 6, or 21 square rods. The simple and valuable rule I have shown should be known by everybody—but is not.

A PLANTATION PUZZLE.

THE nine black trees in the diagram are in the original position. The three black trees struck out



are the ones to be transplanted and are shown in their new positions, together with the new tenth tree, as four white trees. So everything will be quite clear.

MISSING WORDS.

THE words in their order are: tops, pots, stop, spot, post.

BUYING FRUIT.

THE man must have bought 48 plums @ 3d. each and 48 pears @ 4d. each, *i.e.*, 96 fruits for 28s. If he had bought 56 plums @ 3d. and 42 pears @ 4d. he would have spent 14s. on each kind of fruit and obtained 98 fruits in all, or two more than before.

THE DOCTOR'S CHESS PUZZLE.

PLAY as follows: 1. P—K 3, P—K 3; 2. P—K R 4, Q × P; 3. R × Q, P—K R 4; 4. Q—B 3, K—Q sq.: 5. R × P, R × R; 6. Q × R, P—K B 3.

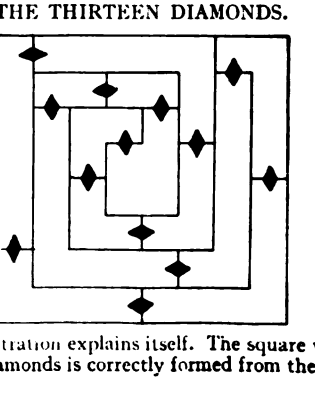
A WORD SQUARE.

P A S T O R
A T T I R E
S T U P I D
T I P T O E
O R I O L E
R E D E E M

THE MAGISTERIAL BENCH

APART from any conditions, 10 men can be arranged in line in $\underline{|10}$ ways=3,628,800. Now how many of these cases are barred? Regard two of a nationality in brackets as one item. (1) Then (E E) (S S) (W W) F I S A can be permuted in $\underline{|7} \times 2^3$ ways=40,320. Remember the two E's can change places within their bracket wherever placed, and so with the S's and the W's. Hence the 2^3. (2) But we may get (E E) (S S) W W F I S A, where the W's are not bracketed, but free. This gives $\underline{|8} \times 2^2$ cases, but we must deduct result (1) or these will be included a second time. Result, 120,960. (3) Deal similarly with the two S's unbracketed. Result, 120,960. (4) Deal again with the E's unbracketed. Result, 120,960. (5) But we may have (E E) S S W W F I S A, where both S and W are unbracketed. This gives $\underline{|9} \times 2$ cases, but we must deduct results (1), (2), and (3) for reasons that will now be obvious. Result, 443,520. (6) When only S is bracketed, deducting (1), (2), and (4). Result, 443,520. (7) When only W is bracketed, deducting (1), (3), and (4). Result, 443,520. Add these seven results together and you get 1,733,760, which deducted from the number first given above leaves 1,895,040 as the number of ways in which the ten men may sit.

THE THIRTEEN DIAMONDS.



THE illustration explains itself. The square with its thirteen diamonds is correctly formed from the pieces.

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HERLOCK HOLMES AGAIN!

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By

A. CONAN DOYLE

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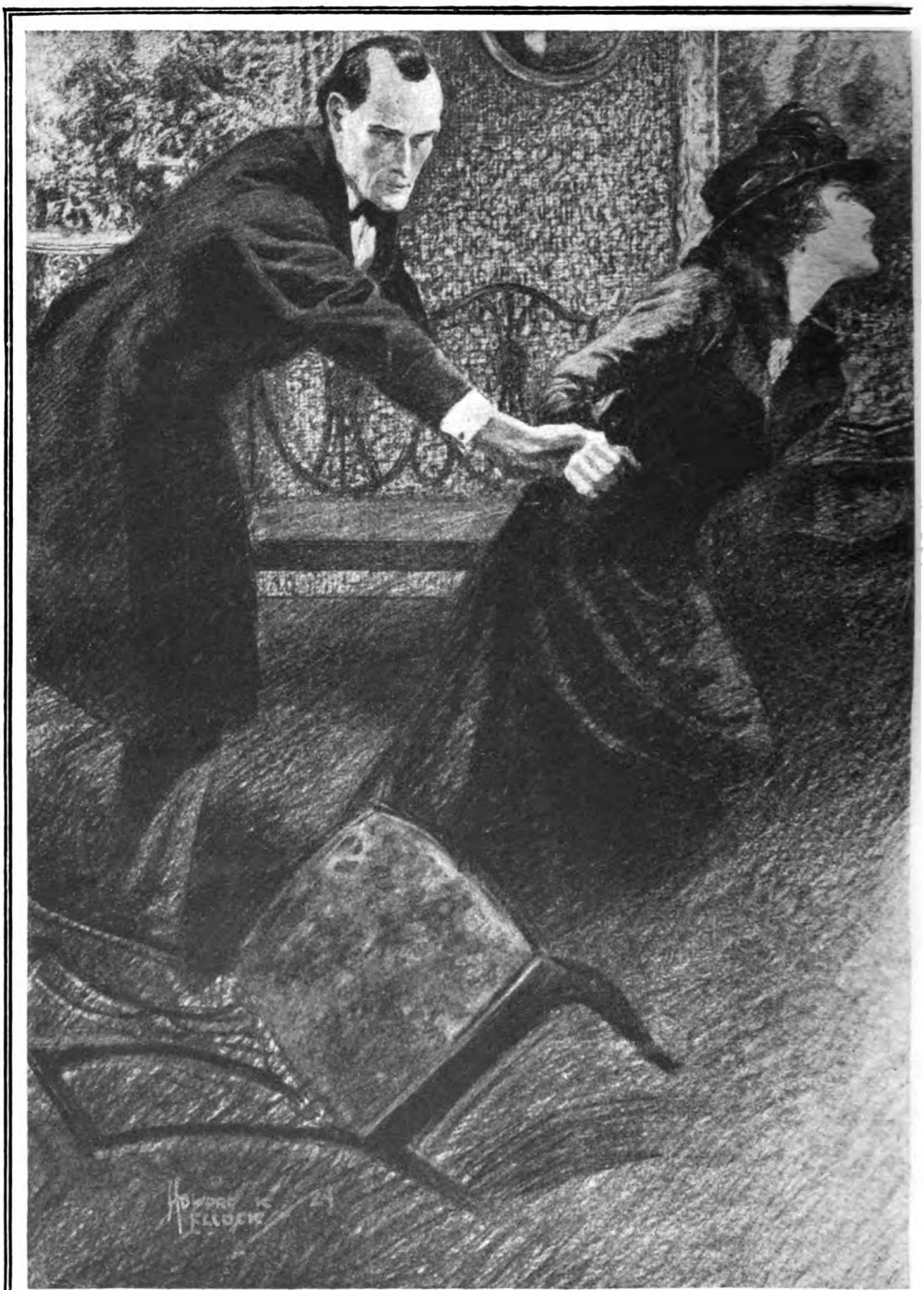

"'MR. HOLMES, I BEG THAT YOU WILL BRING THIS INTERVIEW TO AN END,' SAID THE ICY VOICE. WITH AN OATH MISS WINTER DARTED FORWARD, AND IF I HAD NOT CAUGHT HER WRIST SHE WOULD HAVE CLUTCHED THIS MADDENING WOMAN BY THE HAIR."

(See page 118.)

The Adventure of The Illustrious Client

A New SHERLOCK HOLMES Story

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

"IT can't hurt now," was Mr. Sherlock Holmes's comment when, for the tenth time in as many years, I asked his leave to reveal the following narrative. So it was that at last I obtained permission to put on record what was, in some ways, the supreme moment of my friend's career.

Both Holmes and I had a weakness for the Turkish Bath. It was over a smoke in the pleasant lassitude of the drying-room that I have found him less reticent and more human than anywhere else. On the upper floor of the Northumberland Avenue establishment there is an isolated corner where two couches lie side by side, and it was on

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these that we lay upon September 3rd, 1902, the day when my narrative begins. I had asked him whether anything was stirring, and for answer he had shot his long, thin, nervous arm out of the sheets which enveloped him and had drawn an envelope from the inside pocket of the coat which hung beside him.

"It may be some fussy, self-important fool, it may be a matter of life or death," said he, as he handed me the note. "I know no more than this message tells me."

It was from the Carlton Club, and dated the evening before. This is what I read:—

"Sir James Damery presents his compliments to Mr. Sherlock Holmes, and will call upon him at 4.30 to-morrow. Sir James begs to say that the matter upon which he desires to consult Mr. Holmes is very delicate, and also very important. He trusts, therefore, that Mr. Holmes will make every effort to grant this interview, and that he will confirm it over the telephone to the Carlton Club."

"I need not say that I have confirmed it, Watson," said Holmes, as I returned the paper. "Do you know anything of this man Damery?"

"Only that his name is a household word in Society."

"Well, I can tell you a little more than that. He has rather a reputation for arranging delicate matters which are to be kept out of the papers. You may remember his negotiations with Sir George Lewis over the Hammerford Will case. He is a man of the world with a natural turn for diplomacy. I am bound, therefore, to hope that it is not a false scent and that he has some real need for our assistance."

"Our?"

"Well, if you will be so good, Watson."

"I shall be honoured."

"Then you have the hour—four-thirty. Until then we can put the matter out of our heads."

I WAS living in my own rooms in Queen Anne Street at the time, but I was round at Baker Street before the time named. Sharp to the half-hour, Colonel Sir James Damery was announced. It is hardly necessary to describe him, for many will remember that large, bluff, honest personality, that broad, clean-shaven face, above all, that pleasant, mellow voice. Frankness shone from his grey Irish eyes, and good humour played round his mobile, smiling lips. His lucent top-hat, his dark frock-coat, indeed, every detail, from the pearl pin in the black satin cravat to the lavender spats over the varnished shoes, spoke of the meticulous care in dress for which he was famous. The big, masterful aristocrat dominated the little room.

"Of course, I was prepared to find Dr. Watson," he remarked, with a courteous bow. "His collaboration may be very necessary, for we are dealing on this occasion, Mr. Holmes, with a man to whom violence is familiar and who will, literally, stick at nothing. I should say that there is no more dangerous man in Europe."

"I have had several opponents to whom that flattering term has been applied," said Holmes, with a smile. "Don't you smoke? Then you will excuse me if I light my pipe. If your man is more dangerous than the late Professor Moriarty, or than the living Colonel Sebastian Moran, then he is indeed worth meeting. May I ask his name?"

"Have you ever heard of Baron Gruner?"

"You mean the Austrian murderer?"

Colonel Damery threw up his kid-gloved hands with a laugh. "There is no getting past you, Mr. Holmes! Wonderful! So you have already sized him up as a murderer?"

"It is my business to follow the details of Continental crime. Who could possibly have read what happened at Prague and have any doubts as to the man's guilt! It was a purely technical legal point and the suspicious death of a witness that saved him! I am as sure that he killed his wife when the so-called 'accident' happened in the Splugen Pass as if I had seen him do it. I knew, also, that he had come to England, and had a presentiment that sooner or later he would find me some work to do. Well, what has Baron Gruner been up to? I presume it is not this old tragedy which has come up again?"

"No, it is more serious than that. To revenge crime is important, but to prevent it is more so. It is a terrible thing, Mr. Holmes, to see a dreadful event, an atrocious situation, preparing itself before your eyes, to clearly understand whither it will lead, and yet to be utterly unable to avert it. Can a human being be placed in a more trying position?"

"Perhaps not."

"Then you will sympathize with the client in whose interests I am acting."

"I did not understand that you were merely an intermediary. Who is the principal?"

"Mr Holmes, I must beg you not to press that question. It is important that I should be able to assure him that his honoured name has been in no way dragged into the matter. His motives are, to the last degree, honourable and chivalrous, but he prefers to remain unknown. I need not say that your fees will be assured and

Sherlock Holmes shot his long, thin, nervous arm out of the sheets and drew an envelope from the inside pocket of the coat which hung beside him.

that you will be given a perfectly free hand. Surely the actual name of your client is immaterial ? "

" I am sorry," said Holmes. " I am accustomed to have mystery at one end of my cases, but to have it at both ends is too confusing. I fear, Sir James, that I must decline to act."

Our visitor was greatly disturbed. His large, sensitive face was darkened with emotion and disappointment.

" You hardly realize the effect of your own action, Mr. Holmes," said he. " You place me in a most serious dilemma, for I am perfectly certain that you would be proud to take over the case if I could give you the facts, and yet a promise forbids me from revealing them all. May I, at least, lay all that I can before you ? "

" By all means, so long as it is understood that I commit myself to nothing."

" That is understood. In the first place, you have no doubt heard of General de Merville ? "

" De Merville of Khyber fame ? Yes, I have heard of him."

" He has a daughter, Violet de Merville, young. rich, beautiful, accomplished, a wonder-woman in every way. It is this daughter, this lovely, innocent girl, whom we are endeavouring to save from the clutches of a fiend."

" Baron Gruner has some hold over her, then ? "

" The strongest of all holds where a woman is concerned—the hold of love. The fellow is, as you may have heard, extraordinarily handsome, with a most fascinating manner, a gentle voice, and that air of romance and mystery which mean so much to a woman. He is said to have the whole sex at his mercy and to have made ample use of the fact."

" But how came such a man to meet a lady of the standing of Miss Violet de Merville ? "

" It was on a Mediterranean yachting voyage. The company, though select, paid their own passages. No doubt the promoters hardly realized the Baron's true character until it was too late. The villain attached himself to the lady, and with such effect that he has completely and absolutely won her heart. To say that she loves him hardly expresses it. She dotes upon him, she is obsessed by him. Outside of him

there is nothing on earth. She will not hear one word against him. Everything has been done to cure her of her madness, but in vain. To sum up, she proposes to marry him next month. As she is of age and has a will of iron, it is hard to know how to prevent her."

"Does she know about the Austrian episode?"

"The cunning devil has told her every unsavoury public scandal of his past life, but always in such a way as to make himself out to be an innocent martyr. She absolutely accepts his version and will listen to no other."

"Dear me! But surely you have inadvertently let out the name of your client? It is no doubt General de Merville."

Our visitor fidgeted in his chair.

"I could deceive you by saying so, Mr. Holmes, but it would not be true. De Merville is a broken man. The strong soldier has been utterly demoralized by this incident. He has lost the nerve which never failed him on the battlefield and has become a weak, doddering old man, utterly incapable of contending with a brilliant, forceful rascal like this Austrian. My client, however, is an old friend, one who has known the General intimately for many years and taken a paternal interest in this young girl since she wore short frocks. He cannot see this tragedy consummated without some attempt to stop it. There is nothing in which Scotland Yard can act. It was his own suggestion that you should be called in, but it was, as I have said, on the express stipulation that he should not be personally involved in the matter. I have no doubt, Mr. Holmes, with your great powers you could easily trace my client back through me, but I must ask you, as a point of honour, to refrain from doing so, and not to break in upon his incognito."

Holmes gave a whimsical smile.

"I think I may safely promise that," said he. "I may add that your problem interests me, and that I shall be prepared to look into it. How shall I keep in touch with you?"

"The Carlton Club will find me. But, in case of emergency, there is a private telephone call, 'XX.31.'"

Holmes noted it down and sat, still smiling, with the open memorandum-book upon his knee.

"The Baron's present address, please?"

"Vernon Lodge, near Kingston. It is a large house. He has been fortunate in some rather shady speculations and is a rich man, which, naturally, makes him a more dangerous antagonist."

"Is he at home at present?"

"Yes."

"Apart from what you have told me, can you give me any further information about the man?"

"He has expensive tastes. He is a horse fancier. For a short time he played polo at Hurlingham, but then this Prague affair got noised about and he had to leave. He collects books and pictures. He is a man with a considerable artistic side to his nature. He is, I believe, a recognized authority upon Chinese pottery, and has written a book upon the subject."

"A complex mind," said Holmes. "All great criminals have that. My old friend Charlie Peace was a violin virtuoso. Wainwright was no mean artist. I could quote many more. Well, Sir James, you will inform your client that I am turning my mind upon Baron Gruner. I can say no more. I have some sources of information of my own, and I daresay we may find some means of opening the matter up."

WHEN our visitor had left us, Holmes sat so long in deep thought that it seemed to me that he had forgotten my presence. At last, however, he came briskly back to earth.

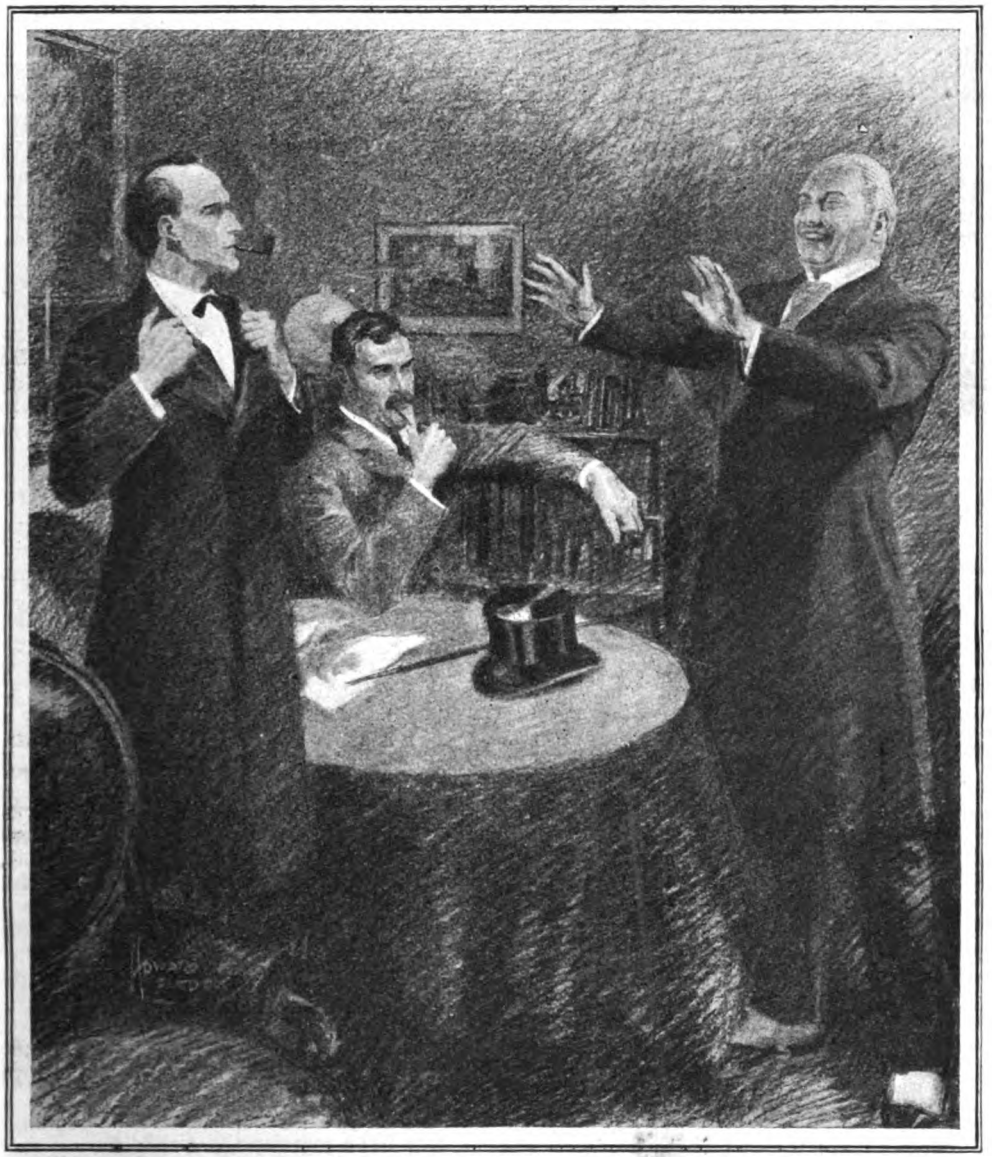
"Well, Watson, any views?" he asked.

"I should think you had better see the young lady herself."

"My dear Watson, if her poor old broken father cannot move her, how shall I, a stranger, prevail? And yet there is something in the suggestion if all else fails. But I think we must begin from a different angle. I rather fancy that Shinwell Johnson might be a help."

I have not had occasion to mention Shinwell Johnson in these memoirs because I have seldom drawn my cases from the latter phases of my friend's career. During the first years of the century he became a valuable assistant. Johnson, I grieve to say, made his name first as a very dangerous villain and served two terms at Parkhurst. Finally, he repented and allied himself to Holmes, acting as his agent in the huge criminal underworld of London, and obtaining information which often proved to be of vital importance. Had Johnson been a "nark" of the police he would soon have been exposed, but as he dealt with cases which never came directly into the courts, his activities were never realized by his companions. With the glamour of his two convictions upon him, he had the *entrée* of every night-club, doss-house, and gambling-den in the town, and his quick observation and active brain made him an ideal agent for gaining information. It was to him that Sherlock Holmes now proposed to turn.

It was not possible for me to follow the immediate steps taken by my friend, for I had some pressing professional business of



Colonel Damery threw up his kid-gloved hands with a laugh. "There is no getting past you, Mr. Holmes! Wonderful!"

my own, but I met him by appointment that evening at Simpson's, where, sitting at a small table in the front window, and looking down at the rushing stream of life in the Strand, he told me something of what had passed.

"Johnson is on the prowl," said he. "He may pick up some garbage in the darker recesses of the underworld, for it is down there, amid the black roots of crime, that we must hunt for this man's secrets."

"But, if the lady will not accept what is already known, why should any fresh discovery of yours turn her from her purpose?"

"Who knows, Watson? Woman's heart and mind are insoluble puzzles to the male. Murder might be condoned or explained, and yet some smaller offence might rankle. Baron Gruner remarked to me——"

"He remarked to you!"

"Oh, to be sure, I had not told you of my plans! Well, Watson, I love to come to close grips with my man. I like to meet

him eye to eye and read for myself the stuff that he is made of. When I had given Johnson his instructions, I took a cab out to Kingston and found the Baron in a most affable mood."

"Did he recognize you?"

"There was no difficulty about that, for I simply sent in my card. He is an excellent antagonist, cool as ice, silky voiced and soothing as one of your fashionable consultants, and poisonous as a cobra. He has breed in him, a real aristocrat of crime, with a superficial suggestion of afternoon-tea and all the cruelty of the grave behind it. Yes, I am glad to have had my attention called to Baron Adelbert Gruner."

"You say he was affable?"

"A purring cat who thinks he sees prospective mice. Some people's affability is more deadly than the violence of coarser souls. His greeting was characteristic. 'I rather thought I should see you sooner or later, Mr. Holmes,' said he. 'You have been engaged, no doubt, by General de Merville to endeavour to stop my marriage with his daughter, Violet. That is so, is it not?'.

"I acquiesced.

"'My dear man,' said he, 'you will only ruin your own well-deserved reputation. It is not a case in which you can possibly succeed. You will have barren work, to say nothing of incurring some danger. Let me very strongly advise you to draw off at once.'

"'It is curious,' I answered, 'but that was the very advice which I had intended to give you. I have a respect for your brains, Baron, and the little which I have seen of your personality has not lessened it. Let me put it to you as man to man. No one wants to rake up your past and make you unduly uncomfortable. It is over, and you are now in smooth waters, but if you persist in this marriage you will raise up a swarm of powerful enemies who will never leave you alone until they have made England too hot to hold you. Is the game worth it? Surely you would be wiser if you left the lady alone. It would not be pleasant for you if these facts of your past were brought to her notice.'

"The Baron has little waxed tips of hair under his nose, like the short antennæ of an insect. These quivered with amusement as he listened, and he finally broke into a gentle chuckle.

"'Excuse my amusement, Mr. Holmes,' said he, 'but it is really funny to see you trying to play a hand with no cards in it. I don't think anyone could do it better, but it is rather pathetic, all the same. Not a colour card there, Mr. Holmes, nothing but the smallest of the small.'

"'So you think.'

"'So I know. Let me make the thing clear to you, for my own hand is so strong that I can afford to show it. I have been fortunate enough to win the entire affection of this lady. This was given to me in spite of the fact that I told her very clearly of all the unhappy incidents in my past life. I also told her that certain wicked and designing persons—I hope you recognize yourself—would come to her and tell her these things, and I warned her how to treat them. You have heard of post-hypnotic suggestion, Mr. Holmes? Well, you will see how it works, for a man of personality can use hypnotism without any vulgar passes or tomfoolery. So she is ready for you and, I have no doubt, would give you an appointment, for she is quite amenable to her father's will—save only in the one little matter.'

"WELL, Watson, there seemed to be no more to say, so I took my leave with as much cold dignity as I could summon, but, as I had my hand on the door-handle, he stopped me.

"'By the way, Mr. Holmes,' said he, 'did you know Le Brun, the French agent?'

"'Yes,' said I.

"'Do you know what befell him?'

"'I heard that he was beaten by some Apaches in the Montmartre district and crippled for life.'

"'Quite true, Mr. Holmes. By a curious coincidence he had been inquiring into my affairs only a week before. Don't do it, Mr. Holmes; it's not a lucky thing to do. Several have found that out. My last word to you is, go your own way and let me go mine. Good-bye!'

"So there you are, Watson. You are up to date now."

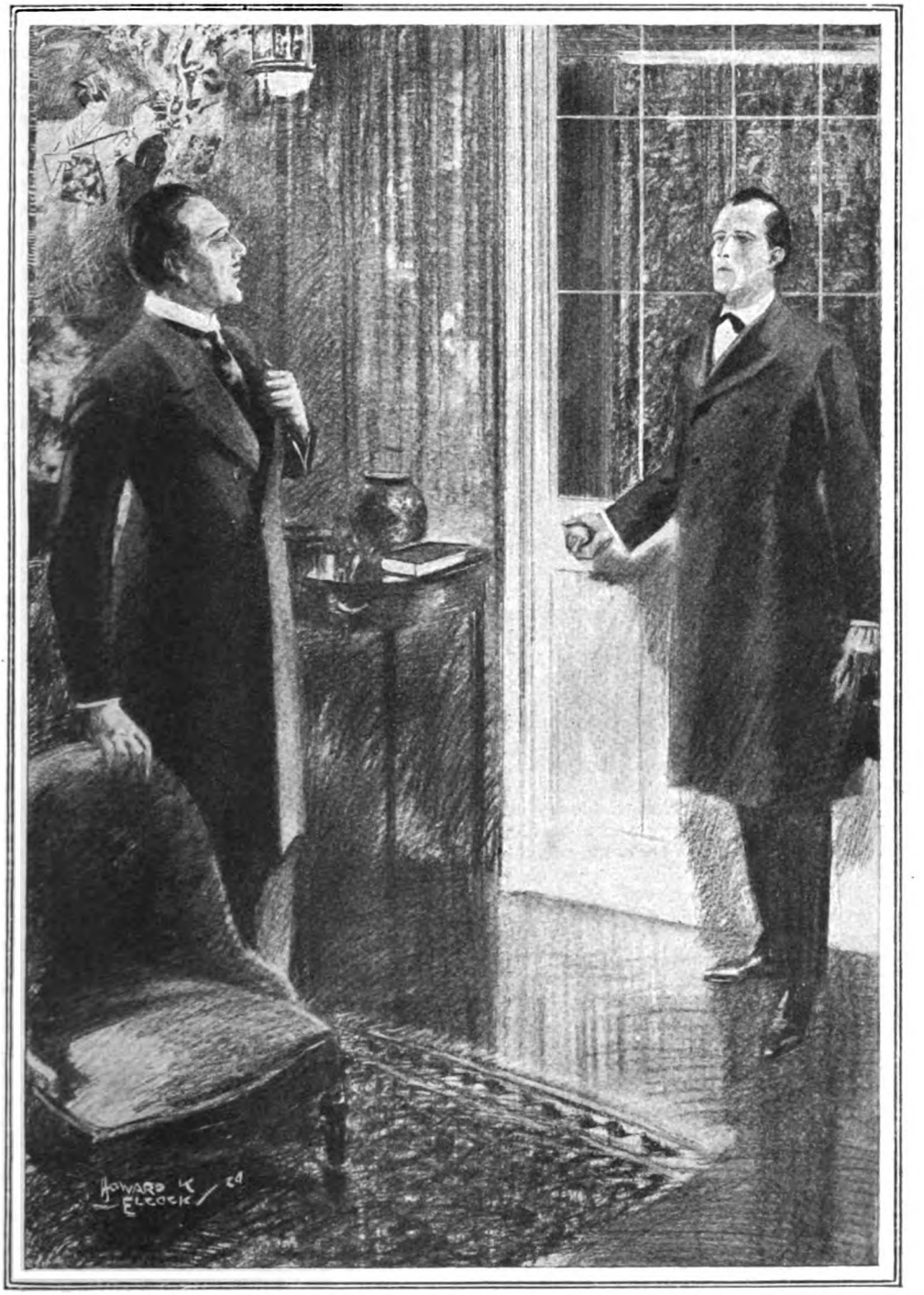
"The fellow seems dangerous."

"Mighty dangerous. I disregard the blusterer, but this is the sort of man who says rather less than he means."

"Must you interfere? Does it really matter if he marries the girl?"

"Considering that he undoubtedly murdered his last wife, I should say it mattered very much. Besides, the client! Well, well, we need not discuss that. When you have finished your coffee you had best come home with me, for the blithe Shinwell will be there with his report."

We found him sure enough, a huge, coarse, red-faced, scorbutic man, with a pair of vivid black eyes which were the only external sign of the very cunning mind within. It seems that he had dived down into what was peculiarly his kingdom, and beside him on the settee was a brand which he had brought up in the shape of a slim, flame-like young woman with a pale, intense face,



As I had my hand on the door-handle, he stopped me. "My last word to you is, go your own way and let me go mine. Good-bye!"

youthful, and yet so worn with sin and sorrow that one read the terrible years which had left their leprous mark upon her.

"THIS is Miss Kitty Winter," said Shinwell Johnson, waving his fat hand as an introduction. "What she don't know—well, there, she'll speak for herself. Put my hand right on her, Mr. Holmes, within an hour of your message."

"I'm easy to find," said the young woman. "Hell, London, gets me every time. Same address for Porky Shinwell. We're old mates, Porky, you and I. But, by Cripes! there is another who ought to be down in a lower Hell than we if there was any justice in the world! That is the man you are after, Mr. Holmes."

Holmes smiled. "I gather we have your good wishes, Miss Winter."

"If I can help to put him where he belongs, I'm yours to the rattle," said our visitor, with fierce energy. There was an intensity of hatred in her white, set face and her blazing eyes such as woman seldom and man never can attain. "You needn't go into my past, Mr. Holmes. That's neither here nor there. But what I am Adelbert Gruner made me. If I could pull him down!" She clutched frantically with her hands into the air. "Oh, if I could only pull him into the pit where he has pushed so many!"

"You know how the matter stands?"

"Porky Shinwell has been telling me. He's after some other poor fool and wants to marry her this time. You want to stop it. Well, you surely know enough about this devil to prevent any decent girl in her senses wanting to be in the same parish with him."

"She is not in her senses. She is madly in love. She has been told all about him. She cares nothing."

"Told about the murder?"

"Yes."

"My Lord, she must have a nerve!"

"She puts them all down as slanders."

"Couldn't you lay proofs before her silly eyes?"

"Well, can you help us do so?"

"Ain't I a proof myself? If I stood before her and told her how he used me——"

"Would you do this?"

"Would I? Would I not!"

"Well, it might be worth trying. But he has told her most of his sins and had pardon from her, and I understand she will not reopen the question."

"I'll lay he didn't tell her all," said Miss Winter. "I caught a glimpse of one or two murders besides the one that made such a fuss. He would speak of someone in his velvet way and then look at me with a steady eye and say: 'He died within a month.' It wasn't hot air, either. But I took little notice—you see, I loved him myself at that time. Whatever he did went with me, same as with this poor fool! There was just one thing that shook me. Yes, by Cripes! if it had not been for his poisonous, lying tongue that explains and soothes, I'd have left him that very night. It's a book he has—a brown leather book with a lock, and his arms in gold on the outside. I think he was a bit drunk that night, or he would not have shown it to me."

"What was it, then?"

"I tell you, Mr. Holmes, this man collects women, and takes a pride in his collection, as some men collect moths or butterflies. He had it all in that book. Snapshot photographs, names, details, everything about them. It was a beastly book—a book no man, even if he had come from the gutter, could have put together. But it was Adelbert Gruner's book all the same. 'Souls I have ruined.' He could have put that on the outside if he had been so minded. However, that's neither here nor there, for the book would not serve you, and, if it would, you can't get it."

"Where is it?"

"How can I tell you where it is now? It's more than a year since I left him. I know where he kept it then. He's a precise, tidy cat of a man in many of his ways, so maybe it is still in the pigeon-hole of the old bureau in the inner study. Do you know his house?"

"I've been in the study," said Holmes.

"Have you, though? You haven't been slow on the job if you only started this morning. Maybe dear Adelbert has met his match this time. The outer study is the one with the Chinese crockery in it—big glass cupboard between the windows. Then behind his desk is the door that leads to the inner study—a small room where he keeps papers and things."

"Is he not afraid of burglars?"

"Adelbert is no coward. His worst enemy couldn't say that of him. He can look after himself. There's a burglar alarm at night. Besides, what is there for a burglar—unless they got away with all this fancy crockery?"

"No good," said Shinwell Johnson, with the decided voice of the expert. "No fence wants stuff of that sort that you can neither melt nor sell."

"Quite so," said Holmes. "Well, now, Miss Winter, if you would call here tomorrow evening at five, I would consider in the meanwhile whether your suggestion of seeing this lady personally may not be arranged. I am exceedingly obliged to you

for your co-operation. I need not say that my clients will consider liberally——"

"None of that, Mr. Holmes," cried the young woman. "I am not out for money. Let me see this man in the mud, and I've got all I worked for—in the mud with my foot on his cursed face. That's my price. I'm with you to-morrow or any other day so long as you are on his track. Porky here can tell you always where to find me."

I DID not see Holmes again until the following evening, when we dined once more at our Strand restaurant. He shrugged his shoulders when I asked him what luck he had had in his interview. Then he told the story, which I would repeat in this way. His hard, dry statement needs some little editing to soften it into the terms of real life.

"There was no difficulty at all about the appointment," said Holmes, "for the girl glories in showing abject filial obedience in all secondary things in an attempt to atone for her flagrant breach of it in her engagement. The General 'phoned that all was ready, and the fiery Miss W. turned up according to schedule, so that at half-past five a cab deposited us outside 104, Berkeley Square, where the old soldier resides—one of those awful grey London castles which would make a church seem frivolous. A footman showed us into a great yellow-curtained drawing-room, and there was the lady awaiting us, demure, pale, self-contained, as inflexible and remote as a snow image on a mountain.

"I don't quite know how to make her clear to you, Watson. Perhaps you may meet her before we are through, and you can use your own gift of words. She is beautiful, but with the ethereal other-world beauty of some fanatic whose thoughts are set on high. I have seen such faces in the pictures of the old masters of the Middle Ages. How a beast-man could have laid his vile paws upon such a being of the beyond I cannot imagine. You may have noticed how extremes call to each other, the spiritual to the animal, the cave-man to the angel. You never saw a worse case than this.

"She knew what we had come for, of course—that villain had lost no time in poisoning her mind against us. Miss Winter's advent rather amazed her, I think, but she waved us into our respective chairs like a Reverend Abbess receiving two rather leprous mendicants. If your head is inclined to swell, my dear Watson, take a course of Miss Violet de Merville.

"'Well, sir,' said she, in a voice like the wind from an iceberg, 'your name is familiar to me. You have called, as I understand, to malign my *fiancé*, Baron Gruner. It is only by my father's request that I see you at all, and I warn you in advance that anything you can say could not possibly have the slightest effect upon my mind.'

"I was sorry for her, Watson. I thought of her for the moment as I would have thought of a daughter of my own. I am not often eloquent. I use my head, not my heart. But I really did plead with her with all the warmth of words that I could find in my nature. I pictured to her the awful position of the woman who only wakes to a man's character after she is his wife—a woman who has to submit to be caressed by bloody hands and lecherous lips. I spared her nothing—the shame, the fear, the agony, the hopelessness of it all. All my hot words could not bring one tinge of colour to those ivory cheeks or one gleam of emotion to those abstracted eyes. I thought of what the rascal had said about a post-hypnotic influence. One could really believe that she was living above the earth in some ecstatic dream. Yet there was nothing indefinite in her replies.

"'I have listened to you with patience, Mr. Holmes,' said she. 'The effect upon my mind is exactly as predicted. I am aware that Adelbert, that my *fiancé* has had a stormy life in which he has incurred bitter hatreds and most unjust aspersions. You are only the last of a series who have brought their slanders before me. Possibly you mean well, though I learn that you are a paid agent who would have been equally willing to act for the Baron as against him. But in any case I wish you to understand once for all that I love him and that he loves me, and that the opinion of all the world is no more to me than the twitter of those birds outside the window. If his noble nature has ever for an instant fallen, it may be that I have been specially sent to raise it to its true and lofty level. I am not clear,' here she turned her eyes upon my companion, 'who this young lady may be.'

"I was about to answer when the girl broke in like a whirlwind. If ever you saw flame and ice face to face, it was those two women.

"'I'll tell you who I am,' she cried, springing out of her chair, her mouth all twisted with passion. 'I am his last mistress. I am one of a hundred that he has tempted and used and ruined and thrown into the refuse heap, as he will you also. *Your* refuse heap is more likely to be a grave, and maybe that's the best. I tell you, you foolish woman, if you marry this man he'll be the death of you. It may be a broken heart or it may be a broken neck, but he'll have you one way or the other. It's not out of love for you I'm speaking. I don't care a tinker's

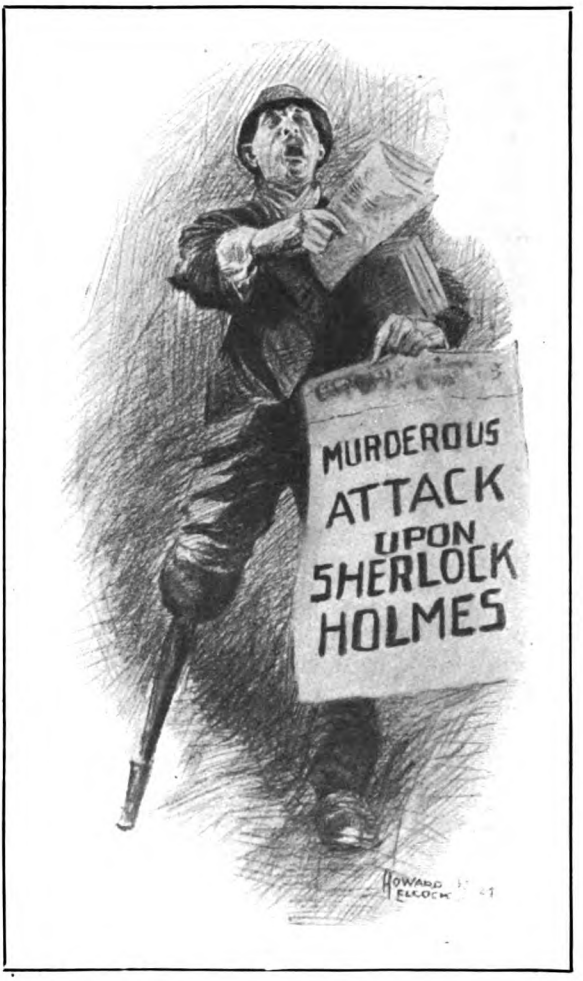
curse whether you live or die. It's out of hate for him and to spite him and to get back on him for what he did to me. But it's all the same, and you needn't look at me like that, my fine lady, for you may be lower than I am before you are through with it.'

"'I should prefer not to discuss such matters,' said Miss de Merville, coldly. 'Let me say once for all that I am aware of three passages in my *fiancé's* life in which he became entangled with designing women, and that I am assured of his hearty repentance for any evil that he may have done.'

"'Three passages!' screamed my companion. 'You fool! You unutterable fool!'

"'Mr. Holmes, I beg that you will bring this interview to an end,' said the icy voice. 'I have obeyed my father's wish in seeing you, but I am not compelled to listen to the ravings of this person.'

"With an oath Miss Winter darted forward, and if I had not caught her wrist she would have clutched this maddening woman by the hair. I dragged her towards the door, and was lucky to get her back into the cab without a public scene, for she was beside herself with rage. In a cold way I felt pretty furious myself, Watson, for there was something indescribably annoying in the calm aloofness and supreme self-complaisance of the woman whom we were trying to save. So now once again you know exactly how we stand, and it is clear that I must plan some fresh opening move, for this gambit won't work. I'll keep in touch with you, Watson, for it is more than likely that you will have your part to play, though it is just possible that the next move may lie with them rather than with us."



AND it did. Their blow fell—or his blow rather, for never could I believe that the lady was privy to it. I think I could show you the very paving-stone upon which I stood when my eyes fell upon the placard, and a pang of horror passed through my very soul. It was between the Grand Hotel and Charing Cross Station, where a one-legged newsvender displayed his evening papers. The date was just two days after the last conversation. There, black upon yellow, was the terrible news-sheet :—

MURDEROUS
ATTACK
UPON
SHERLOCK
HOLMES.

(To be concluded next month.)

ROMANCE, RATTLESNAKES AND MIDDLEMEN

by

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

I.

ILLUSTRATED BY REGINALD CLEAVER

VICTOR ORDE scraped acquaintance with Miss Nancy Lawrence in Kensington Gardens, because Nancy's Chow, a beast of more than human intelligence, had insisted upon following Victor instead of his mistress. Anybody who knows anything about Chows will admit that this was most extraordinary. Victor, however, was not surprised. The wildest and shyest of animals recognized in young Orde a friend. Whether he carried food for them or not, birds settled upon his shoulders; if he stood still in any of the public parks, squirrels cuddled up to him. When he mentioned this to Miss Lawrence, she smiled sweetly and forgave the faithless Chow. Acquaintance ripened into friendship, and that in turn was kindled into a warmer sentiment. The day dawned when Victor pointed out to Nancy that the prospects of an articled clerk with those crusted family solicitors, Hemingway and Batson, were not sufficiently bright to justify marriage. Nancy, a sensible girl, repudiated the time-worn lovers' contention that what was enough for one would suffice for two.

"We should be indissolubly ONE," affirmed the ardent young man.

Mr. Nicholas Hemingway happened to be Orde's uncle, a bachelor who might leave a "plum" to a deserving nephew in the fullness of time.

"But," said Victor, "the old lad doesn't regard me, his only sister's son, as deserving; and he's likely to outlive—I mean outexist, because he never has *lived*—me."

"Would he be so inconsiderate?" murmured Nancy.

"You don't know him, my lamb. It's a liberal education not to know such a man as Uncle Nick."

This was unfair on Mr. Hemingway. In his own peculiar fashion he invited trust and confidence, but he did not trust or confide in others; a lean, secretive, desiccated man, but not unkindly or ungenerous if you delved deep beneath a petrified surface.

Nancy, who had never met Mr. Hemingway, asked two questions, pebbles dropped into a pond, which affected tremendously two placid lives.

"How do family solicitors make their money? Why are they called *family* solicitors?"

"Hemingway and Batson," replied Victor, promptly, "are really middlemen. The business is not what it was simply because so many old families are down and out. My uncle bucks to me because he keeps his clients out of expensive litigation. Some of the older clients hand over to him all their affairs. I can't mention names, but one doddering old marquess can't buy a toothbrush without consulting Uncle Nick. His ancient lordship hasn't a cheque-book. Uncle sends him what petty cash he wants. Incredible, but true! Mind you, Uncle Nick knows his job. He protects his diehards against everybody except himself. There are nice pickings——! He only charges legal fees for his little flip-flaps, but—the letters! And the—interviews! Time is indeed money when Uncle Nick is talking with his Victorian clients."

"What is a middleman, Vic?"

"Your father is a middleman, but he might be furious if you told him so. He is the head of an old-established firm of *family* wine-merchants. He is too honest

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to make the wine. He buys it in the open market and sells at a profit. He is a go-between. So is Uncle Nick. He buys and sells land, shares, farming implements, and every other thing that the old families are too lazy to buy for themselves. Have you got it ? "

Nancy nodded.

" Why can't you do this, Vic ? "

" I shall in time if—which is no cert—I get a junior partnership, and if, by then, there are any old families left."

" I mean *now*, dearest. It seems so easy. You find out what some lazy person wants ; you buy it, whatever it is, in the wholesale market, deliver the goods, and charge the retail price."

" Yes ; sounds easy as kiss hands, but it isn't."

II.

NEVERTHELESS the idea burgeoned. Within a week an opportunity presented itself. A Daughter of the Golden West expressed a wish to buy a lion cub, a wish put into print by a retailer of Society gossip. Victor, in the true spirit of adventure, wrote to the young lady :—

" Am prepared to supply magnificent lion cub."

Having dispatched this curt epistle, and without waiting for a reassuring reply, he rushed down to Zamrach's and secured an option on a lion's cub. He made the acquaintance of the cub ; he fondled it ; the cub seemed to like Victor.

Next day Victor took the cub to Claridge's Hotel, and played " Hunt the Slipper " with it in the presence of the millionairess. He made a fiver out of the deal as middleman and a friend of Mr. Zamrach. He cuddled the cub, saying with superb effrontery :—

" If your friends want anything in the zoo-ological line, here is my business card."

Upon the card was inscribed in neat script his uncle's address in Old Square, Lincoln's Inn Fields.

That, of course, was unsound tactics, but the mere name, Old Square, inspired confidence. It was part of Victor's matutinal duties to attend to the correspondence. Letters addressed to himself he could stuff into a pocket without challenging attention.

During the following fortnight he sold a mongoose, a flamingo, several macaws and parrots, and a small crocodile.

Business being so brisk, he inadvertently perpetrated a second blunder. Hemingway and Batson, creatures of habit, invariably lunched together at one. Between one and two, Victor, so to speak, was in command of offices so dingy, so dirty, that they never failed to command instant respect from all visitors. Buyers of strange beasts and fowls began to call upon Mr. Orde, by appointment, between one and two.

Incidentally, he squared Binks, the office-boy, which was wise, inasmuch as a young lady, connected with the theatrical profession, called inopportunely between two and half-past, when Victor was eating his chop in the Strand. The office-boy said, blandly :—

" The gentleman who attends to our wild beast department has just stepped out. Will you kindly write, madam ? "

" I only wanted a python that I could play with on the stage."

" We don't keep our pythons in Old Square, madam. Our Mr. Orde will submit to you a sample."

" Do you sell many snakes ? "

" Business in serpents, madam, has been slumping, but it's looking up."

This slight misadventure ought to have been a warning to Victor, but it wasn't. He laughed and tipped handsomely a very promising liar.

Nancy, to use her own words, was the first to get cold toes. Victor's success as a middleman frightened her. Instinct suggested that her lover was gambolling upon the edge of a volcano. The gift of a bangle did not allay her virginal fears.

" If your uncle finds out——"

" Why should he ? "

" I said IF——"

" The 'ifs,' Nancy, coagulated as they may appear to a maiden of your tender years, are really the romance of life. If I am sacked I shall start a lucrative business of my own. If past success indicates, as it does, a golden future, we two shall be furnishing a tiny flat before we know where we are."

They embraced fondly.

III.

AS Victor pointed out to Nancy, it is only the path of untrue love that runs smooth as tarmac to the hymeneal altar. Nancy's father eyed an articled clerk with detachment rather than attachment. At his house Victor was not *persona grata*. Accordingly, the young people were in the habit of meeting in Peter Pan Land, or, when it rained, at the National Gallery. When young Orde appeared at luncheon on Sundays Mr. Lawrence gave him port from the wood.

Mr. Hemingway, for his part, also regarded his sister's son with detachment, because he had detested Victor's father.

Victor summed up the situation :—

" Your father, darlingest, and my uncle are not interested in the deserving poor, but in the preserving rich. I made nine pounds eleven shillings and fourpence last week. What does that work out *per annum* ? "

Not being a lightning calculator, Nancy replied, elusively :—

" If it were a fixed income——"

It wasn't. Victor admitted that no man could keep his finger upon the pulse of a crank public. A profitable sale of a giraffe fell through, simply because the giraffe—as Mr. Zamrach put it—" up and died."

Finally, a remunerative deal was effected in rattlesnakes. In the Land of the Bone Dry, rattlesnakes (for some inscrutable reason) are often exhibited in drug stores. Presumably, the curiosity which a deadly snake provokes leads to the sale of medicinal whisky, with the wise injunction : " Better before than after the bite." Anyway, an Englishman who had visited California conceived the idea of displaying rattlesnakes in his drug-store window as being more likely to attract post-war customers than the purple jars beloved by Rosamund. Victor bought the rattlesnakes and promised to deliver them, safe and sound, to the purchaser.

Next day Victor took the cub to Claridge's Hotel, and played " Hunt the Slipper " with it in the presence of the millionairess.

At this moment Fortune ceased smiling upon young Mr. Orde.

Victor carried the rattlesnakes in a small hamper from Zamrach's to Old Square before ten. His uncle and Mr. Batson always left the office upon the stroke of five.

At five-thirty Victor had promised to deliver the snakes to the druggist. That gentleman had provided a superb plate-glass tank and a commissariat department, including frogs and mice.

Victor hid the hamper in his own small room. At two, when Mr. Hemingway passed into his room, which adjoined Victor's, our hero left Old Square, returning in high spirits at a quarter to three. During the luncheon interval he met a client by appointment, and sold to him a kangaroo. More, this new client had a friend who wanted a platypus. Victor recklessly promised to supply the strange beast.

"Can't quote market price offhand because there is no steady demand for platypi. To a friend of yours I shall shave the price if possible."

Passing through the narrow passage where Binks polished up his capacity for lying with such light fiction as tickled his palate, Victor noticed that Binks looked "queer." Victor, being a quarter of an hour late, asked, hurriedly :—

"Has my uncle asked for me?"

"No, Mr. Orde. 'Is Grice the Dook o' Glastonbury is with your uncle."

As Binks spoke, Mr. Batson summoned Binks. Victor walked into his room, and before tackling clerical work took a glance at the hamper.

The lid was up. The hamper was empty!

Even by the unco guid Victor will be held blameless for uttering one word :—

"Damn!"

He said no more. He realized that a vocabulary acquired in the trenches could not do the subject justice.

The room—Victor called it a hutch—was very small. Within half a minute he knew that the snakes must be looked for elsewhere. The vagabonds might be in his uncle's room, where they would find warmth and good cover.

He heard voices.

The Duke of Glastonbury was Mr. Hemingway's most distinguished client. Like the unnamed marquess, he, too, entrusted his family solicitor with affairs which a lesser magnate might have attended to himself. The Duke was West Country in character, temperament, and appearance. It was said of his father that the particular housemaid who had the privilege of making the ducal bed had to wear white kid gloves before she was permitted to touch the ducal sheets.

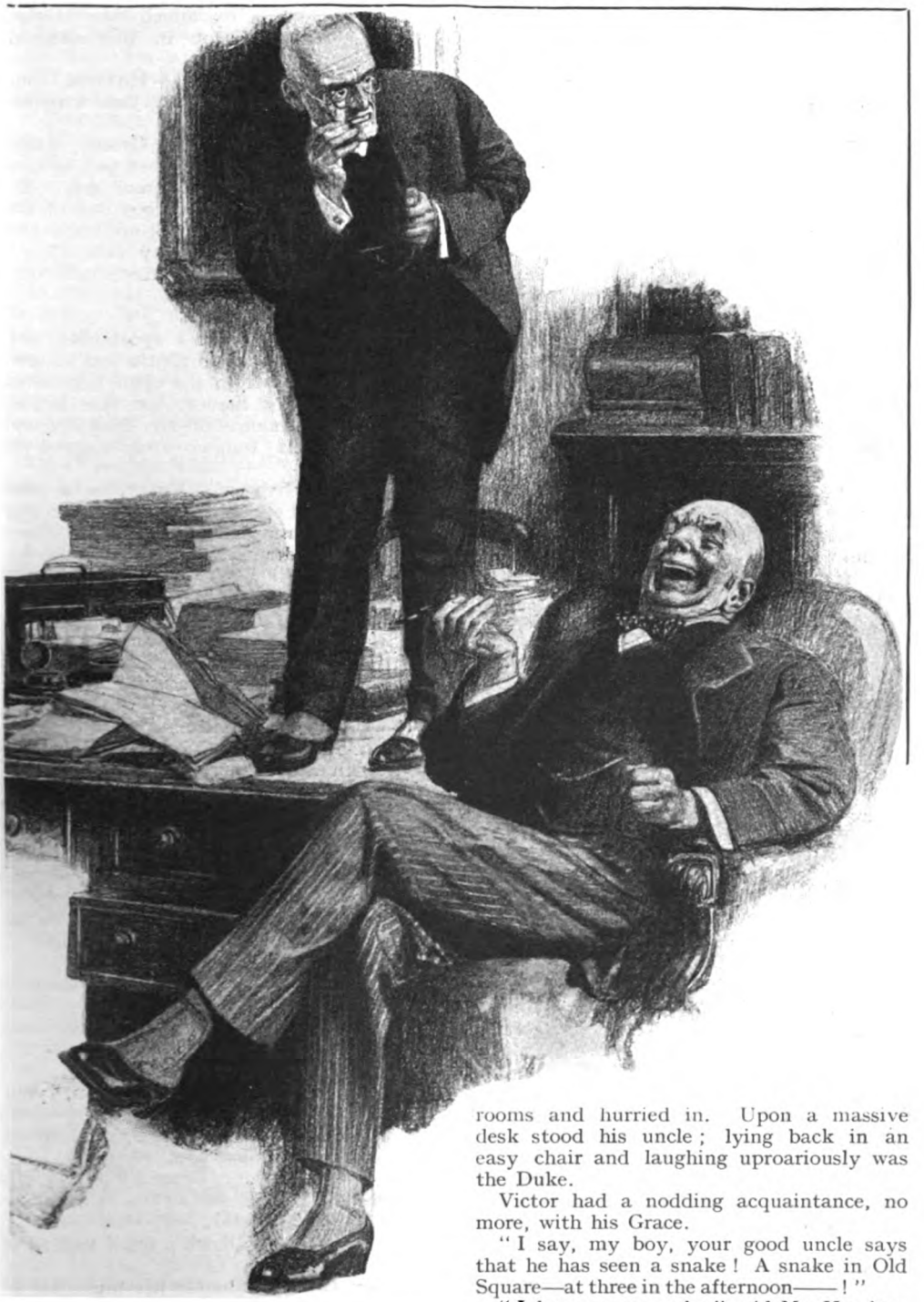
A loud voice from the sanctum exclaimed in genial tones :—

"What did you drink at luncheon, old fellow?"

The next moment his uncle's bell tinkled :

Victor opened the door and hurried in. Upon a massive desk stood his uncle; lying back in an easy chair and laughing uproariously was the Duke.

"I say, my boy, your good uncle says that he has seen a snake!"



Victor always answered Mr. Hemingway's bell.

He opened the door between the two rooms and hurried in. Upon a massive desk stood his uncle; lying back in an easy chair and laughing uproariously was the Duke.

Victor had a nodding acquaintance, no more, with his Grace.

"I say, my boy, your good uncle says that he has seen a snake! A snake in Old Square—at three in the afternoon——!"

"I *have* seen a snake," said Mr. Hemingway, in trembling accents.

Victor guessed that his uncle's solidly-constructed mind was in ruins beneath ducal

ridicule. Obviously his Grace of Glastonbury believed that a family solicitor of hitherto unblemished reputation saw snakes that were not. Mr. Hemingway had no tincture of Hibernian blood in his veins, but the Duke's Homeric laughter gave birth to a bull.

"If there isn't a snake in this room, I'll eat it."

Victor collated the trembling tones of Mr. Hemingway with the wobbly lips of Binks. He knew his Binks. Binks was inquisitive to the *n*th degree. Binks had seen an articled clerk arrive that morning with a mysterious hamper. Binks, between one and two, must have opened that hamper. What he beheld inside it had prevented him from closing it again. Probably Binks had fled.

"A s-s-snake?" stammered Victor.

Mr. Hemingway continued, in an angry voice:—

"I saw a serpent and the serpent saw me. It vanished. It looked a deadly serpent."

Victor bowed deprecatingly.

He was collecting his wits and trying, at the same time, to control his risible muscles.

"Where did you see the snake, uncle?"

"I saw a flat, hideous head and part of the body at the edge of those tin boxes."

Victor said, suavely:—

"Let me hunt for this snake."

"You are a brave young man, Victor. Take my cane—which is in that corner—and kill the reptile."

Reluctantly, Victor grasped a malacca cane. Mr. Zamrach had said a few enlightening words concerning rattlesnakes. In December they are in a lethargic condition, but become lively as eels when warmed up. Not far from the tin boxes stood the radiator.

Victor, poking with the cane, dislodged some papers—and jumped hastily. He had heard a sound that puts fear into most men and into all beasts: the warning rattle of *crotalus horridus* coiled and poised for the lashing stroke.

"Ha, ha!" roared the Duke. "A rattlesnake, b' Jove! You were right, Hemingway. I beg pardon—abjectly."

"Not another word, your Grace, I entreat."

From his chair the Duke issued commands.

"You are quite safe, my boy. A rattlesnake can only strike about eighteen inches. Bang him on the head!"

Victor could see the head and vibrant tail. He knew that his number was up as an articled clerk, and into his mind crept the invincible determination to deliver the goods to his purchaser—alive.

"I'm sorry," he said, calmly. "These snakes are mine."

"Good God!" exclaimed the Duke. "How many are there in this damned room?"

Mr. Hemingway winced. He told himself that he was damned together with his room.

"There are only two, your Grace. I said they were mine, but really they belong to a friend who bought them from me. By some mischance they have got out of the hamper which held them. If my uncle and your Grace will go into my room for a moment, I will try and put them back into the hamper."

NOW the Duke was a sportsman who acclaimed pluck in gentle and simple. He glanced from the open, ingenuous face of the young man to the thunderous, crinkled countenance of Mr. Hemingway, who found his tongue and wagged it savagely:—

"We will leave you, Victor, with your pets. Be good enough to remove them and yourself from my premises. You are either a fool or a madman, and I have no use for either."

"But I want to see him catch 'em," said the Duke.

Majestically, Mr. Hemingway descended from his desk and crossed the room.

"That is as your Grace pleases." He went out.

The Duke said, genially:—

"Foot-and-mouth disease has stopped hunting in my country, but this is more exciting than any fox-chase. Eleu in, my boy!"

Victor approached the tin boxes. He could not see the snake because it had wriggled away.

"Tally ho!"

Two snakes broke cover, glided across the carpet, and found harbourage behind a curtain.

"We wind 'em—we wind 'em!" shouted an M.F.H.

An unmistakable smell of snake was wafted to ducal nostrils.

"Kill 'em, and have done with it."

"I can't afford to kill them, your Grace."

"You can't catch 'em alive, my boy. I lay six to four against you."

"In pounds, your Grace?"

The Duke nodded.

"Done," said Victor.

"And, b' Jove, I'll whip in, if you want me."

"Your Grace's valuable life must not be imperilled."

"Hate looking on at rare sport," growled the magnate, "but I never interfere with the huntsman."

Victor's next move was to empty a large waste-paper basket. Then he looked pleadingly at the Duke.

"If your Grace would stand upon your chair. I'm going to bolt the rattlers."

"You trust me to make an emergency exit if necessary."

"Must separate 'em, your Grace."

He poked at the curtain. The snakes wriggled out from beneath it. One coiled and rattled. In an instant it was under the waste-paper basket.

"Who-whoop!" shouted the Duke.

At this moment Mr. Batson appeared. He knew that the Duke of Glastonbury was with the senior partner, and he knew that his Grace, upon occasion, even in Old Square, amused himself by making what Mr. Batson called "hunting noises." But the ear-shattering *Who-whoop!* had been too much for him.

The Duke, beholding Mr. Batson's cherubic face and two interrogatory eyebrows, yelled out:—

"'Ware snake, Batson!"

Petrified with astonishment, Mr. Batson stood still. Victor asked a question:—

"May I borrow, sir, your waste-paper basket?"

At this moment Mr. Batson saw the uncaptured snake. Apparently business of urgent private importance constrained him to retire into his own room with undignified haste. The Duke grinned.

"Not exactly a thruster, what?"

"A skirter," admitted Victor. The Duke laughed; he was thoroughly enjoying himself.

"Hoick forrard! Hoick forrard!"

"This will serve," said Victor. He took from his uncle's desk an immense basket that held the most important papers. He turned it upside down. The last will and testament of a bishop fell upon the floor.

"Who—whoop!" yelled the Duke.

Victor had captured snake number two by inciting it to coil and then, as before, deftly popping the basket over it.

"Good boy!" said his Grace; "but—if you lift those baskets, the varmints'll diddle you."

Victor sought for and found a large piece of cardboard. He slipped this under snake and basket, and turned the basket right side up.

"I lose six pounds," said the Duke, cheerfully.

"They're not in the hamper yet."

It was past four when they were in the hamper.

IV.

THEN the Duke, in the presence of Mr. Hemingway, asked the inevitable question:—

"Why is your nephew in the snake business?"

Mr. Hemingway, scowling at Victor, replied, curtly:—

"Let us hope that it will keep him out of a lunatic asylum or the workhouse."

"It's a long story," said Victor, noting a twinkle in the ducal eye. "I—I suppose, your Grace, I inherit from my uncle aptitudes as a middleman."

"A middleman?"

"What an expression to apply to me!" exclaimed Mr. Hemingway.

"You buy and sell for his Grace, uncle. I have been buying and selling strange beasts and birds and reptiles for my clients. I'm making a decent income at it. You see, I want to marry. I can't marry upon the small salary I earn here and the modest allowance made to me by my mother."

"Marry?" gasped Mr. Hemingway. "What next?"

"I might, sir, have to provide for a small family."

Mr. Hemingway looked shocked, but the Duke laughed.

"Come, come, old friend, this nephew of yours is a corker. You ought to be proud of him. You ought—forgive me for saying so—to give the boy promotion for this afternoon's work. He would infuse 'drive' into a slightly lymphatic business. I'd back him to buy and sell for me. Which reminds me."

He pulled out a bundle of Bradburys and handed six of them to Victor.

"You are tipping my nephew for turning loose rattlesnakes in my room!"

"I'm settling a bet, Hemingway. Romance and rattlers! What a combination!" He glanced at his watch. "I'm late for an appointment. No matter. I've had a rare bit of fun. Now, my boy, I'm up at Glastonbury House for a couple of days. I'm dining alone at the Buskin to-night at eight. Will you join me and spin the yarn from beginning to end?"

"With the greatest pleasure," said Victor.

The Duke bustled away. Mr. Hemingway stared thoughtfully at his nephew, beholding him with clearer vision.

"Whom do you want to marry, Victor?"

"Miss Nancy Lawrence. *Her* father doesn't know yet that I want to marry his daughter. He regards me, sir, as you do, with indifferent eyes. I have not made good with him, but I shall."

Mr. Hemingway nodded, but his glance, wandering from Victor's face, rested upon the hamper.

"Take that hamper to your—*client* at once."

Victor tucked the hamper under his arm and started for the door.

"Wait! Have you—a—the right clothes to—to wear to-night?"

"Why am I shell-shocked as I'm drinking my tea?"

"The good old dinner jacket, uncle. Or would you advise—a swallow-tail?"

Mr. Hemingway grunted :—

"Cap and bells and motley would be more fitting than either. Off with you!"

"Am I to come back, sir?"

"Under all the circumstances, do you want to come back?"

"I want to make good here."

"You can come back to-morrow."

V.

THE hamper was delivered within half an hour. Victor, knowing the habits of Nancy's father, who played bridge at his club after leaving his office, decided that a cup of tea from Nancy's hands would be very refreshing. Nancy happened to be alone. Victor recited his adventures, and the young lady was thrilled. Having a vivid imagination, she envisaged Victor bitten to death by a brace of rattlesnakes and expiring in agony upon a well-worn body Brussels carpet.

"I must tell daddy."

At this moment daddy appeared, not in the best of tempers. He greeted young Orde with studied coldness.

"Why aren't you playing bridge, dad?"

"Don't ask silly questions! I'm not playing bridge because I am here."

"Victor will tell you a funny story about rattlesnakes."

"Um! I was not aware, Nancy, that your slight acquaintance with Mr. Orde justified the use of his Christian name."

Nancy, slightly piqued, retorted smartly:—

"If it were slight, it wouldn't."

Mr. Lawrence stared at sparkling eyes. Wisely he said nothing. Nancy handed him a cup of tea. Victor, encouraged by the pressure of a small foot under the table, told his amazing tale for the second time. Somehow it improved in the telling. Mr. Lawrence blinked, smiled, and finally laughed.

"Of course, your uncle has given you the sack, young man?"

"Not yet, sir. You see, the distinguished client who was with him is the Duke of Glastonbury."

Mr. Lawrence was visibly impressed.

"But that puts the lid on, what?"

"No, sir; the odd combination of rattlesnakes and romance caught the Duke's fancy."

"In telling the story to me, Orde, you left out what seems to have challenged the Duke's interest—the romance. Romance appeals to me, although I'm not a duke. Where does the romance come in?"

"Here!" replied Victor.

"I'm the romance, daddy," cooed Nancy.

All middlemen, having to cater for tastes differing from their own, acquire *expertise* in realizing what "the other fellow" wants. It had never occurred to Mr. Lawrence that his daughter could want Victor Orde. Face to face with the fact he accepted it. He asked, reasonably:—

"Why am I shell-shocked as I'm drinking my tea?"

"We wished to spare your feelings as long as possible, daddy."

"I knew, sir, that as an articled clerk I appeared to you negligible. Now—as a middleman, like yourself—we meet on more equal terms."

"What damned cheek!"

"Pardon me, Mr. Lawrence. My chief asset is not cheek, but initiative. The secret of success in business is to humour human nature. Give a customer what he wants, and shave the price. Don't try to impose your taste and predilections on him or her—particularly HER."

Nancy smiled beguilingly at her father.

"Yes, daddy. For instance, that anæmic young man whom you have been asking to dine here lately finds favour with you, but not with me. He is not like your best Burgundy. He lacks what you call—quality, colour, and vinosity."

Mr. Lawrence pulled himself together.

"I think," he said, stiffly, "that I must ask you, Orde, to leave us."

"Certainly, Mr. Lawrence; but may I come back?"

Nancy murmured, very articulately:—

"Victor is dining with the Duke of Glastonbury. He might come back after dinner."

"You—you are dining with the Duke?"

"Yes, sir. At the Buskin."

"I should like to measure Victor's head, daddy, after dinner, just to see if it is a wee bit swelled."

"I sell wine to the Buskin," said Mr. Lawrence. "If the Duke says anything about the port——"

"I shall tell his Grace," smiled Victor, "from whose cellars it came."

Mr. Lawrence made a gesture which might mean anything or nothing.

"*A toute à l'heure*, Victor," said Nancy.

VI.

WITHIN a week his Grace of Glastonbury bought a large parcel of vintage port from Mr. Lawrence. Victor and Nancy are furnishing a flat on the instalment plan. Messrs. Hemingway and Batson have taken a very junior partner and lost an articled clerk.

The Duke says that he is a middleman.

NEXT MONTH:

"THE BRAVO," a New Short Story by

W. W. JACOBS.

HOW CHARLES DICKENS WROTE HIS BOOKS

Leaves from a HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED NOTEBOOK

With an Explanatory Article by

HARRY B. SMITH

HOWEVER genius may be defined—and "an infinite capacity for taking pains" is perhaps the worst of definitions—it must be conceded that Dickens possessed it. Love him or detest him; read him or bury him in the inner darkness of shelves masked by an iridescent row of best sellers—you cannot ignore him. You may maintain, as has been said, that "there is more intellect in one of Meredith's novels than in all of Dickens's combined," or you may hold with Mr. J. C. Squire (whose verdicts so invariably agree with my own that I consider him practically infallible) that Dickens "could be less easily spared than all subsequent novelists put together." However lofty your brow and disdainful your attitude, you will find yourself comparing somebody to one of his characters or quoting one of his phrases "familiar in our mouths as household words." If you do not, others will, and you will have him thrust upon you though you scorn him even as a Baconian scorns the sly rogue of Stratford who pretended to write plays.

Whether you regard Dickens as a carver of gargoyles or as a close second to Nature in the creation of varied character, his types confront you, hundreds of them alive and memorable; gibbering ghosts you may think them, but they will not down. You may scoff at sentimentality and sneer at exaggeration; but there they are, these men and women—or gnomes and elves and marionettes—and there they have been, many of them, for nearly a century.

Dickens, however, had one quality which suggests doubt of his right to be called a genius. In all that he did he was orderly and methodical. He had the camera eye and the notebook habit; and as a book-keeper has his day book, cash book, and ledger, the novelist had his volumes, too large for pockets, in which he entered his notes as an accountant does, "posting up" his ideas and classifying them. The memoranda and pocket notebooks were probably thrown into the bonfire on the lawn at Gad's Hill when Dickens destroyed all the letters written to him during many years of friendship with his famous contemporaries, a holocaust of which an autograph collector thinks with groans of anguish. One of the ledgers of classified ideas has survived—probably because it was presented by Dickens's daughter, Mrs. Perugini, to her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Comyns Carr—and it is now in the library of an American collector. The book is an octavo of about two hundred pages, bound

in cloth. It was in the possession of Mr. and Mrs. Comyns Carr for a score of years, and from their ownership passed into that of the late Dr. R. T. Jupp, whose famous collection of Dickensiana (including the original raven, Grip, in *Barnaby Rudge*) was sold five years ago. The notebook was bought by Mr. Gabriel Wells, who sold it to Mr. Jerome Kern, the present possessor.

To everyone but the fanatical bibliomaniac who cherishes no volume unless it is as rare and worthless as the proverbial hen's teeth; to all whose craze for books is leavened with some slight incidental interest in their contents, this relic of Dickens is more than a souvenir of a favourite author: it has a definite literary value, for it was in constant use as a record of his ideas during the last twenty years of his life. The memoranda of plots, incidents, and characters give a clearer insight into the author's method of work than is afforded by any of the memoirs and biographies. The notes never utilized suggest the novels that might have been.

In estimating a completed work of any kind, a poem or a pyramid, the circumstances in which it was produced should not affect judgment; the work as it stands is good, bad, or indifferent, and to a critic it matters little whether a book was elaborated at leisure in a library or scribbled on scraps of paper while riding in an omnibus; yet the manner in which Dickens's novels were written should be considered. The larger works were imagined and composed with the printer clamouring for "copy." When Mr. William Hall, of the then new firm of Chapman and Hall, called upon the young reporter and asked him to furnish "a monthly something" to accompany certain sketches by Robert Seymour, it is safe to say that Dickens, after having agreed to do the work, had not the least idea what he was going to write about. His mind may have turned hopefully to odds and ends of material not yet developed in *Sketches by Boz;* and he had on hand portions of two novels which afterward became *Oliver Twist* and *Barnaby Rudge*—then called *Gabriel Varden* — but Mr. Hall's specifications were for something different. Indeed, Dickens admitted that, after arranging with the publisher, he thought of Mr. Pickwick and wrote the first number. This plan of publication in monthly or weekly instalments was followed in all the novels. There could be no revision of the early chapters to adjust ideas and material which had developed as the writing progressed; for the early chapters were in print and irrevocable. One may venture to say that no self-respecting modern novelist would enter into an agreement to write under such conditions.

The handicap was comparatively light in writing *Pickwick*, which is a series of more or less connected *Sketches by Boz*, yet in the early monthly parts of the work it is clear that the writer was floundering; that he had no plan; that he did not know, when he had completed one number, what he was going to write about in the next. The only things certain to him were that there were to be twenty parts, so many pages to a part, and that he was to receive fourteen pounds a month.

In the midst of *Pickwick* he worked at *Oliver Twist*, which appeared as a serial in *Bentley's Miscellany*, and before the story was finished he contracted for *Nicholas Nickleby* to be published in twenty monthly numbers. At the same time he was engaged in writing stage pieces and certain minor works and in editing and rewriting the *Memoirs of Grimaldi*. It is obvious that this quantity and variety of production required for its accomplishment not only phenomenal facility but a systematic economy of time, particularly as Dickens never deprived himself of the usual recreations of young men of his age. His correspondence of this period shows that he played nearly as hard as he worked.

CAPTAIN CUTTLE'S plan—"when found, make a note of"—was Dickens's own: and he adopted it when "the key of the street" was first given to him. The observations which took form as the *Sketches* probably began when the child of nine trudged to and from his work in the blacking factory. A fragment of autobiography records the fact that young David really met the genial waiter and ordered a glass of his "very best ale with a good head on it"; and I have no doubt that Jo in *Bleak House* was a chance companion of the label paster in Warren's cellar. That the boy drudge had some early literary inclination is shown by his confession that he beguiled the monotony of pasting labels by attempting to write advertising verses, one of which effusions he quoted years afterward to John Payne Collier:—

"I pitied the dove, for my bosom was tender;
I pitied the sigh that she gave to the wind;
But I ne'er shall forget the superlative splendour
Of Warren's Jet Blacking, the pride of mankind."

When Dickens became a reporter it is likely that all his memoranda were made in shorthand. "There never was such a shorthand writer," said one of his associates

in the reporters' gallery; and the novelist has told of his writing by the light of a dark lantern, "using the back of his hand for a desk," in a stage-coach making a night journey and exceeding the early Victorian speed limit by going at the rate of fifteen miles an hour. In the present volume the original notes were transcribed, classified, and checked off as used, a formal and plodding process from which detractors might argue that the novelist was no genius but merely a clever observer determined to put his talent to the best practical use.

Among the charges of exaggeration which have been brought against Dickens it has been alleged that even the names of his characters are absurd and impossible, but as Nature outdoes Art in the invention of the fantastic, fact exceeds imagination in the creation of peculiar nomenclature. Fielding christened his hero Tom Jones and let it go at that; but Dickens, with his hundreds of characters, could not find enough Browns, Smiths, and Joneses to go round, and assuredly the names chosen help to make the characters memorable. Knowing Seth Pecksniff, Silas Wegg, and Uriah Heep, who would change them to Johnson, Thompson, and Robinson?

One can see on London signboards to-day names that, if used in Dickens's novels, would be considered far-fetched even for him. In this notebook may be found some that are more eccentric than the most grotesque in the novels; and these were not invented but transcribed by the author from a Board-school list, and were actually given to unfortunate boys and girls when they were too young to protest.

A family might bear the name of Furry through no fault of its own; but that parents should prefix it with Zephaniah and inflict the combination upon a defenceless babe seems like the wanton addition of insult to injury. Knotwell Browndress, William Why, Robin Scrubbam, and Joey Stick are mentioned in the Board-school list, and all would have been justified in lifelong grievances against their parents. The catalogue of boys includes such un-Christian names as Zerubabel, Doctor, and Boetius, and there were girls in that Board school whose spiritual pastors and masters perforce addressed them as Rebinal, Seba, Persia, Aramanda, Balzina, and Gentilla. "Pleasant" is underlined and was conferred upon Miss Riderhood in *Our Mutual Friend*. On the same list appear such pleasing combinations as Matilda Rainbird, Sophia Doomsday, Sally Gimblet, Verity Hawkyard, Sarah Goldsocks, Catherine Two, and Rosetta Dust.

The book also contains many columns of names which have been brought together and classified, obviously from casual notes previously made. There is no indication whether these were found or invented, but few of them are as bizarre as those copied from the Board-school list. Compared to Zephaniah Furry and Sophia Doomsday, such names as Chilby, Queedy, Tarbox, and Powderhill are almost commonplace. Many of them are checked, indicating that they have been used, and among these one recognizes such familiar acquaintances as Headstone—noted as Amos, but changed to Bradley—Sapsea, Rokesmith, Dorrit—also noted as Dorret—Magwitch, Marigold, Merdle, Casby, Podsnap, Pumblechook, Wilfer, Gargery, and Riderhood. Boffin is here, and Silas Wegg—"*with* a wooden leg"—whose reading of the "Decline and Fall Off the Rooshan Empire" was such an important factor in the education of the Golden Dustman. The name of Mag appears and recalls the fact that David Copperfield narrowly escaped being called Thomas Mag, while the novel itself originally was to be *Mag's Diversions*.

DICKENS and Balzac had in common the habit of noting odd names seen on signboards. The French novelist has told of his delight in finding over the door of a shop just the name he wanted—Z. Marcas; and Dickens found ready-made the odd name of Pickwick, one Moses of that ilk being the keeper of a livery stable at Bath. That many of Dickens's names were invented is shown by the elaborate evolution of some of them. Copperfield passed through the preliminary forms of Trotfield, Trotbury, Copperby, and Copperstone. Chuzzlewit, starting as Sweezlewag, worked its way through Chuzzletoe, Chuzzleboy, and Chubblewig. Happily, young Martin escapes all these, and as we have become inured to Chuzzlewit it is not so bad.

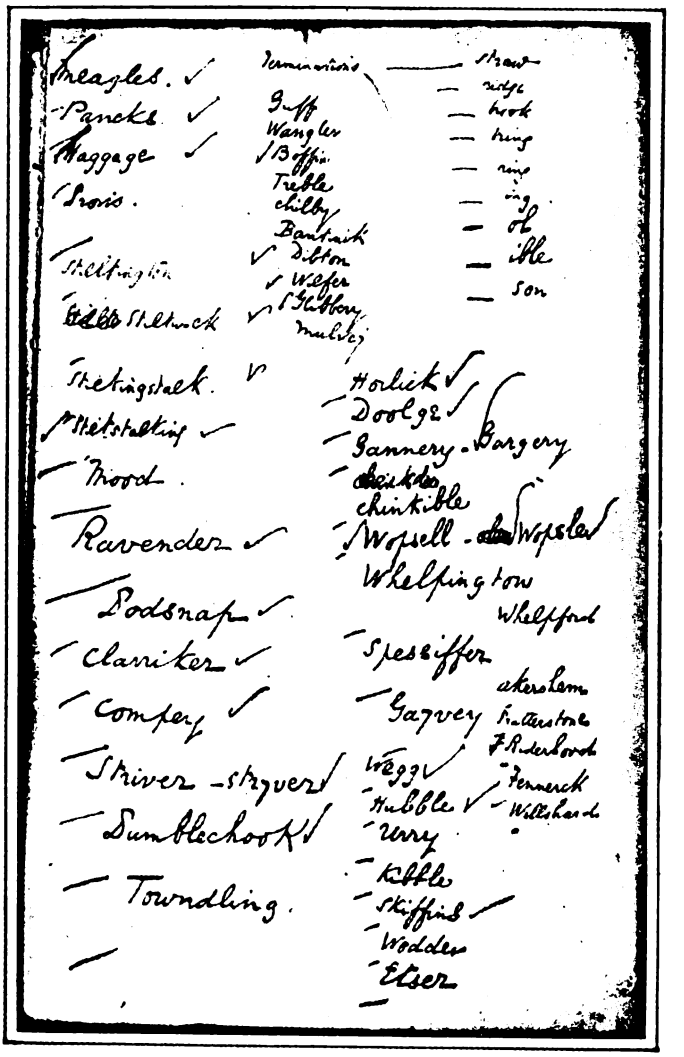
Another department in this ledger of ideas is devoted to titles for stories. Among those checked as used are *Somebody's Luggage*, *To Be Left Till Called For*, and *No Thoroughfare*. *Rokesmith's Forge*, *Dust*, and *The Cinder Heap* are also checked, probably as rejected in favour of *Our Mutual Friend*. Some of the unused titles are *The Lumber Room*, *Something Wanted*, *Two Generations*, *Broken Crockery*, *The Neighbour*, *Children of the Fathers*, and *Nobody's Fault*—all more or less Dickensian in suggestion. These are followed by various ideas for characters and scenes: "A Vestryman, a Briber, a Station Waiting Room, a Physician's Waiting Room, the Royal Academy, the Dentist's Model, the Hair-dresser's Model, the Family Legs, Refreshments at Mugby"—the last the germ of the Christmas Story, *Mugby Junction*. One may trace in many of

these notes the inception and evolution of the novels. The first thought for *A Tale of Two Cities* appears in this form; "How as to a story in two periods—with a lapse of time between, like a French drama?" This is followed by:—

Titles for such a notion —Time!

The Leaves of the Forest
Scattered Leaves
The Great Wheel
Round and Round
Old Leaves
Long Ago
Far Apart
Five and Twenty Years
Years and Years
Rolling Years
Day after Day
Felled Trees
Memory Carton
Rolling Stones
Dried Leaves
Fallen Leaves
Two Generations.

It is curious to find among all these "leaves" and "years" the one name for a character—Memory Carton, thus connecting a progenitor of the self-sacrificing Sydney with the first thought for the novel. On an adjoining page is a note for the same story, referring to the relations of Stryver and Sydney Carton: "The drunken dissipated? What? Lion —and his Jackal and Primer stealing down to him in unwonted hours." Another paragraph may have had reference to the hero, who, at the end of the novel, does "a far, far better thing" than he has ever done by allowing himself to be guillotined:—



A PAGE FROM THE NOTEBOOK.

Dickens has set down possible names of characters, some of which were used later in his novels in the original form or slightly changed.

"There is some virtue in him, too."

"Virtue! Yes, so there is in any grain of seed in a seedsman's shop—but you must put it in the ground before you can get any good out of it."

"Do you mean that *he* must be put in the ground before any good comes of *him*?"

"Indeed I do. You may call it burying him, or you may call it sowing him, as you like. You must set him in the earth before you get any good of him."

The change of the original idea from "a story in two periods" to *A Tale of Two Cities* is indicated by the note:—

Representing London or Paris, or any other great city, in the new light of being actually unknown to all the people in the story, and only taking the colour of their fears and fancies.

Both the main plot and the comedy subplot of *Our Mutual Friend* are readily traced in the memoranda in the notebook. The first thought for the story is recognizable in the note. "Found drowned. The descriptive bill by the waterside." This is checked and marked "Done in Our Mutual." Later occurs a note which

was developed into Hexam and his daughter: "A long-shore man—woman—child, or family. Qy. connect the Found Drowned Bill with this." Eugene Wrayburn's character and his relation to Lizzie Hexam are thus foreshadowed :—

As to the question whether I, Eugene, lying ill and sick even unto death, may be consoled by the representations that, coming through illness, I shall begin a new life and have energy and purpose and all I have yet wanted, I hope I should but I know I shouldn't. Let me die, my dear.

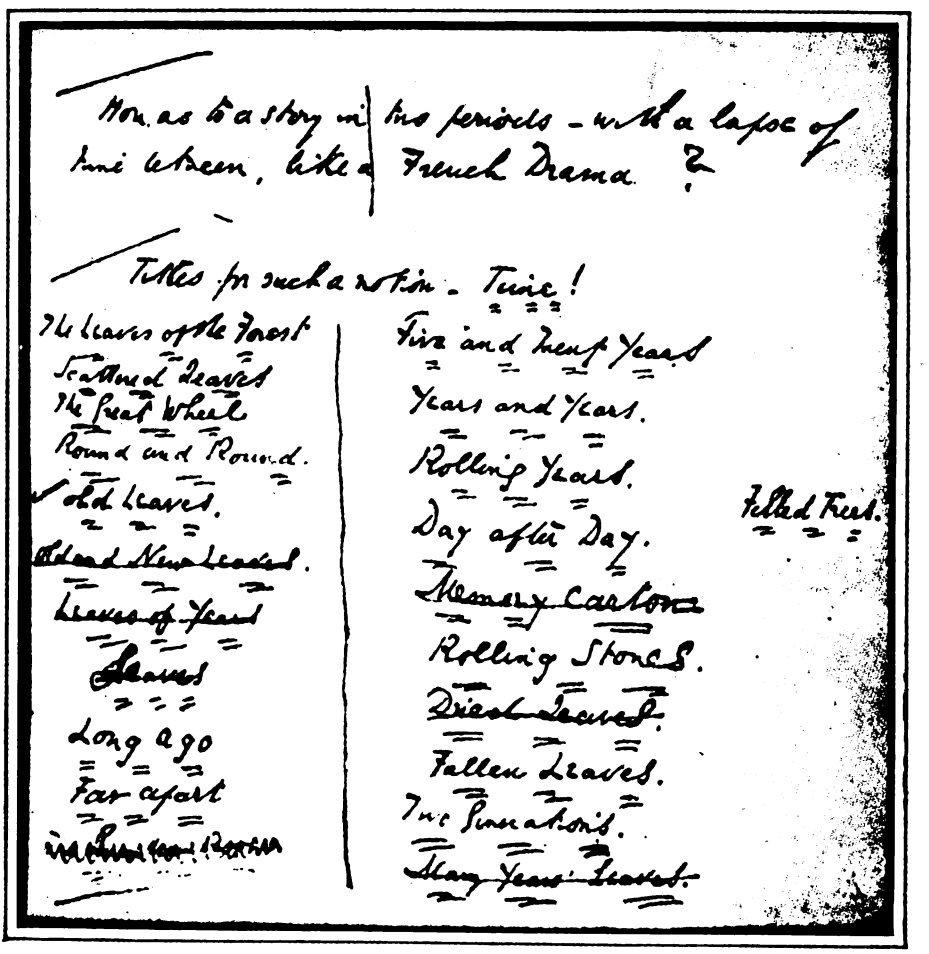
Richard A. Proctor, the astronomer, who was interested in many things—including the mathematics of the game of draw poker—wrote a book about "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," in which he asserted that every novelist has a favourite theme, that of Dickens being *Watched by the Dead*—the title of Proctor's book. This was the central idea of *Our Mutual Friend*, and the genesis of John Harmon disguised as Rokesmith is found in a paragraph :—

Leading Incident for a story: A man—young and eccentric?—feigns to be dead, and *is* dead to all intents and purposes external to himself, and for years retains that singular view of life and character.

Many of the memoranda refer to the comedy elements of the same story, and in them the reader of Dickens will recognize several old acquaintances :—

The old servant expecting the family to come back, left in the deserted house and staying there.

The houseful of toadies and humbugs. They all know and despise one another; but partly to keep their hands in, and partly to make



THE IDEA WHICH BECAME *A TALE OF TWO CITIES*.

Among the tentative titles of such a story is to be noted "Memory Carton."

out their own individual cases, pretend not to detect one another.

A poor impostor of a man marries a woman for her money. She marries him for his money. After marriage both find out their mistake, and enter into a league and covenant against folks in general.

The Veneerings are identified in :—

The perfectly new people. Everything new about them. If they presented a father and mother, it seems as if they must be new, like the furniture and the carriages, shining with varnish and just home from the manufacturers.

The text of a famous scene is found in the note :—

Gibbon's *Decline and Fall.* The two characters. One reporting to the other as he reads. Both getting confused as to whether it is not all going on now.

For *Little Dorrit* there are a number of suggestions, most of which were more or less altered when they came to be embodied in the novel :—

Bed-ridden (or room-ridden) twenty—five and twenty years ; any length of time. As to most things kept at a standstill, all the while thinking of actual streets as the old streets—changed things as unchanged things ; the youth, or girl, I quarrelled with all those years ago as the same youth or girl now. Brought out of doors by an unexpected exercise of latent strength, and how strange! (Done in Mrs. Clennam.)

Arthur Clennam, falling into difficulties and himself imprisoned in the Marshalsea. Then Little Dorrit, out of all her wealth and changed station, comes back in her old dress, and devotes herself in the old way.

The ferryman on a peaceful river, who has been there from youth, who lives, who grows old, who does well, who does ill, who changes, who dies. The river runs six hours up and six hours down. The current sets off at that point. The same allowance must be made for the drifting of the boat. The same tune is always played by the rippling water against the prow.

I affect to believe that I would do anything myself for a ten pound note, and that anybody else would. I affect to be always book-keeping in every man's case and posting up a little account of good and evil with everyone. Thus the greatest rascal becomes "the dearest old fellow" and there is much less difference than you would be inclined to suppose between an honest man and a scoundrel. While I affect to be finding good in most men, I am in reality decrying it where it really is, and setting it up where it is not.

The last two of these, not readily connected in the reader's memory with any striking incidents in the novel, are checked and marked "Done in Dorrit."

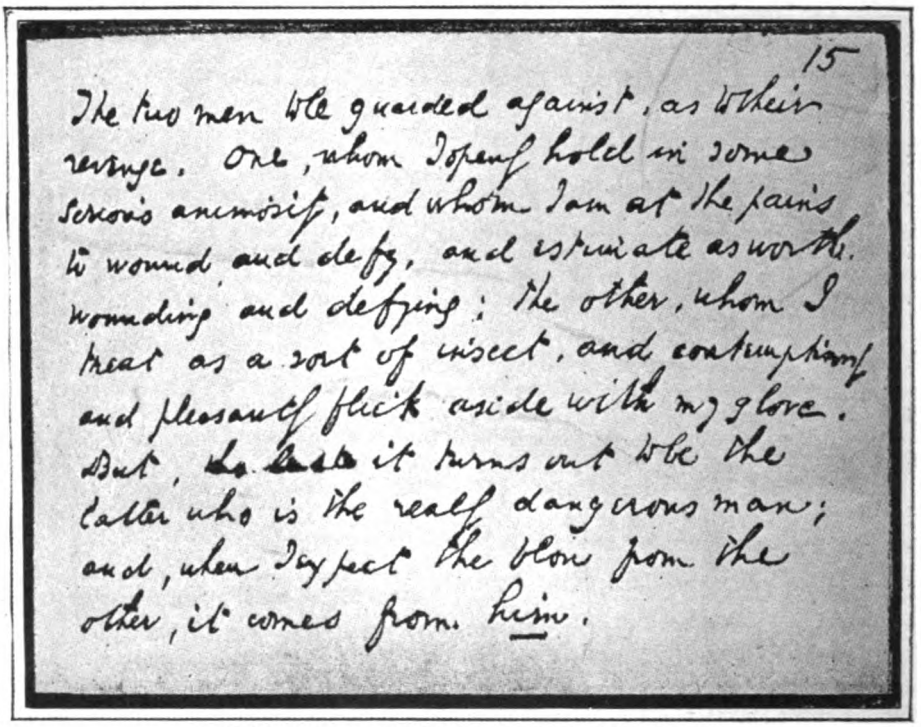
In the fraternity of Dickensians there is an inner circle whose members may be called Droodians ; for to them the great dominant problem of life is not sociological, metaphysical, or how to make a living ; but how did Dickens intend to solve the mystery that gave the title to his last novel. Unhappily for those who are obsessed by this enigma, the notebook affords no clue to the identity of the white-wigged Datchery, no explanation of the Opium Woman's hatred of Jasper, no evidence as to whether Edwin escaped or was efficiently murdered by his affectionate uncle. There are, however, several notes which refer to this novel of many mysteries. One of these memoranda may have suggested the principal dramatic situation of the unfinished story, the scene in which Jasper falls in a fit on learning that he has—or supposes he has—wasted a perfectly good murder and gained nothing by it. A similar situation is found in this paragraph in the notebook :—

There is a case in the State Trials, where a certain officer made love to a (supposed) miser's daughter, and ultimately induced her to give her father slow poison while nursing him in sickness. Her father discovered it, told her so, forgave her, and said: "Be patient, my dear. I shall not live long, even if I recover, and then you shall have all my wealth." Though penitent then, she afterwards poisoned him again (under the same influence), and successfully. Whereupon it appeared that the old man had no money at all, and had lived on a small annuity which died with him, though always feigning to be rich. He had loved this daughter with great affection.

There is another note which suggests a theme that, with variations, was used by Dickens in several books ; the idea of an apparently harmless and insignificant character suddenly disclosed as an avenger who has patiently awaited his opportunity. Jonas Chuzzlewit denounced by Nadgett is an example, and somebody (*who* is the question) in like manner was to bring John Jasper to justice. Those who think that the surly clerk Buzzard is the impersonator of Dick Datchery will find corroboration of their theory in this suggestion :—

The two men to be guarded against as to their revenge. One whom I openly hold in some serious animosity, and whom I am at the pains to wound and defy, and estimate as worth wounding and defying. The other, whom I treat as a sort of insect, and contemptuously and pleasantly flick aside with my glove. But it turns out to be the latter who is the really dangerous man, and when I expect the blow from the other, it comes from *him*.

Thus far Dickens has not been chosen as the subject of a book by any of the ingenious commentators who have discovered that a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The two men We guarded against, as their revenge. One, whom I openly hold in some serious enmity, and whom I am at the pains to wound and defy, and estimate as worth wounding and defying; the other, whom I treat as a sort of insect, and contemptuously and pleasantly flick aside with my glove. But, In fact it turns out We the latter who is the really dangerous man; and, when I expect the blow from the other, it comes from him.

A NOTE ON A FAVOURITE DICKENS THEME.

An apparently insignificant and harmless character turns out to be one of sinister importance. Jonas Chuzzlewit denounced by Nadgett is an example.

volume assailing an established reputation is likely to have a satisfactory sale. His turn will come; for he is a target too conspicuous to be overlooked by writers whose specialty is proving to their own satisfaction that the great are very little. The professional ironist will find congenial material in the fact that the novelist separated from his wife and then quarrelled with his publishers because they declined to print an account of the domestic transaction in *Punch!* His state of mind is expressed briefly in the notebook: "*We* fettered together!" The actual cause of the removal of the fetters remains cryptic, although there have been hints and rumours more or less to the discredit of both parties concerned. Whatever it may have been, the children remained with Dickens (excepting the eldest son, who, at his father's request, went to live with the mother), and there was no interruption of the friendly relations between the novelist and his wife's family. Georgina Hogarth continued as a member of Dickens's household and devoted her life to the care of her sister's children. A memorandum in the book refers to this:—

She sacrificed to children, and sufficiently rewarded. From a child herself, always "the children" (of somebody else) to engross her. And so it comes to pass that she never has a child herself, is never married, is always devoted "to the children" (of somebody else), and they love her, and she has always youth dependent on her till her death—and this quite happily.

Many authors have found in their first love affairs inspiration for sonnets and romantic fiction; but Dickens derived two widely different comedy characters from the lady who first made an impression upon his susceptible heart. Converting the ethereal being into material hurt nobody's feelings, for the portraits were disguised and the identity of their original was only revealed many years after her death. In his early days as a reporter Dickens fell in love with Miss Maria Beadnell, and in his letters written at the time to his chum, Henry Kolle, he laments his sorrow like a young Werther; for Miss Beadnell preferred Mr. Henry Winter, who, apparently, had better prospects. Her *début* in a novel was made in the character of Dora, and a paragraph in the notebook suggests that somewhat irritating child-wife:—

The little babylike married woman—so strange in her new dignity, and talking, with

tears in her eyes, of her sisters and "all of them at home." Never from home before and never going back again.

Twenty years after the temporary blighting of Dickens's life by the unappreciative Miss Beadnell, she wrote to the then famous author asking his assistance in obtaining employment for her husband. She invited her old admirer to call, and he called, but no longer admired. The cruel years had transformed Dora to Flora Finching, who, it will be remembered, tries ineffectively to revive her youthful wiles for the fascination of Arthur Clennam. The following note may refer to Flora and her prototype :—

The lady, *un peu passée*, who is determined to be interesting. No matter how much I love that person—nay, the more so for that very reason—I *must* flutter and bother and be weak and apprehensive and nervous and what not. If I were well and strong, agreeable and self-denying, my friend might forget me.

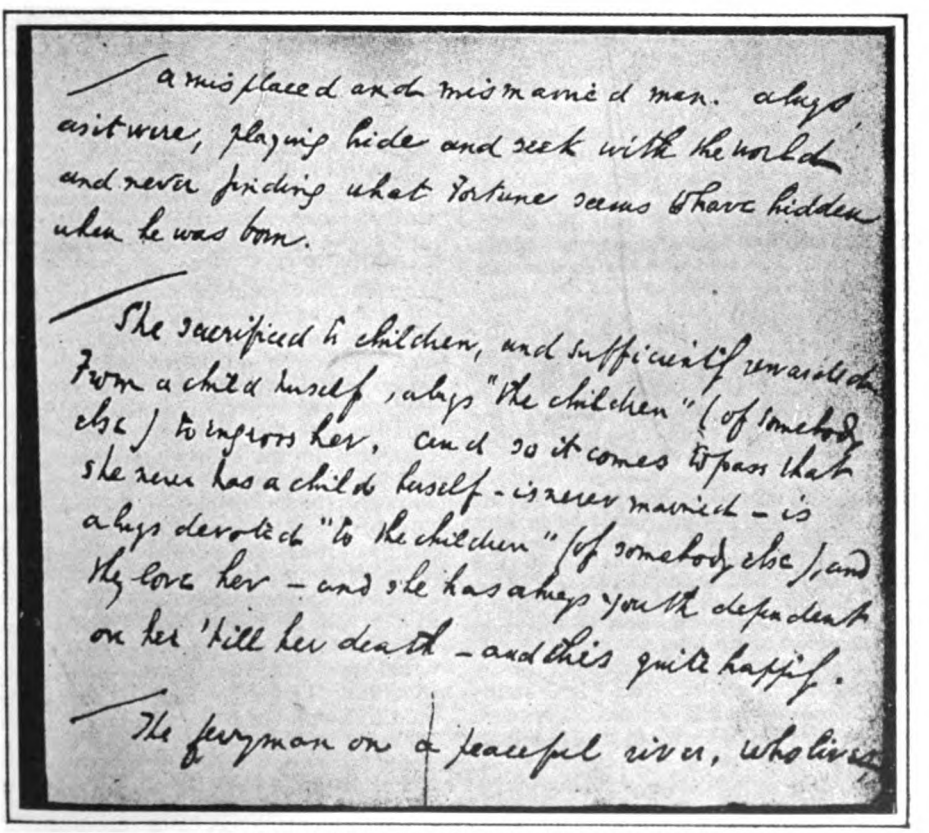
Every novelist must be more or less "a chiel amang ye takin' notes," and with Dickens, taking notes (mental or otherwise) was the great business of life, the foundation of his work. Family and friends were not exempt. The fact that he was the best of sons did not prevent his immortalizing in Micawber some of his father's eccentricities, while certain harmless idiosyncrasies of his mother were embodied in Mrs. Nickleby. The peculiarities selected were blended with imagined characteristics, so there were points of difference as well as of resemblance.

From *Sketches by Boz* to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Dickens was always on watch for anything unusual in human character. He takes a trip to Chatham with John Leech and makes a memorandum of :—

The uneducated father (or uncle) in fustian, and the educated boy in spectacles whom Leech and I saw at Chatham.

Pip in *Great Expectations* did not wear spectacles, but he and Joe Gargery may have been suggested by this note. The novelist meets an unidentified "Miss C. B." and she is promptly recorded as :—

The enthusiastically complimentary person


a misplaced and mismarried man. always at wrong, playing hide and seek with the world and never finding what Fortune seems to have hidden when he was born.

She sacrificed to children, and sufficiently rewarded from a child herself, always "the children" (of somebody else) to engross her, and so it comes to pass that she never has a child herself - is never married - is always devoted "to the children" (of somebody else), and they love her - and she has always youth dependent on her 'till her death - and this quite happily.

The ferryman on a peaceful river, who lives

DICKENS'S TRIBUTE TO HIS SISTER-IN-LAW.

The germ of a story based on the devotion of Georgina Hogarth to the children of Charles Dickens.

who forgets you in her own flowery prosiness as—"I have no need to say to a person of your genius and feeling, and wide range of experience," and then, being short-sighted, puts up her glass, to remember who you are.

An advertisement cut from a newspaper and pasted in the book shows that schools of the Dotheboys sort survived the crusade against them in *Nicholas Nickleby*. It resembles Mr. Wackford Squeers's own prospectus in the novel, with the same insistence on the important details of "no extras or vacations." Once the "dear children" entered here they left hope behind, and the only vacation they could look forward to would be eternal. Such institutions existed in England only in order that unwelcome children might be murdered in a manner strictly within the law.

Most of the ideas for plots, incidents, and characters that have been referred to can be traced to the books in which they appeared; but the greater number of the entries in the notebook were never used; or perhaps it would be safer to say that they are not identified by one who does not pretend to be an omniscient Dickensian. Such suggestions as the following are not extraordinary inspirations and are undeniably sentimental; but they are the kind of material that suited Dickens, and one feels that he would have made something worth while of them:—

Two girls *mis-marrying* two men. The man who has evil in him dragging the superior woman down. The man who has good in him raising the inferior woman up.

Two people in the Incurable Hospital. The poor incurable girl lying on a water-bed, and the incurable man who has a strange flirtation with her; comes and makes confidences to her; snips and arranges her plants; and rehearses to her the comic songs, by writing which he materially helps out his living.

The idea of my being brought up by my mother, me the narrator, my father being dead, and growing up in this belief until I find that my father is the gentleman I have seen, and oftener heard of, who has the handsome young wife and the dog I once took notice of when I was a little child, and who lives in the great house and drives about.

The last has a familiar ring. Is it somewhere in Dickens Land, or has it been used by somebody else? Perhaps, as Sheridan's playwright Puff remarks, two people hit upon the same idea and one of them happened to use it first.

Some of the suggestions for plots and themes indicate that if Dickens had lived longer he might have deviated from the Victorian respectability with which he has been reproached. He might even have selected subjects that would have mildly interested a censor; might have taken up topics of the kind that a plutocratic motion-picture magnate recently described to the writer as "sectional."

THERE is one quality in the work of Dickens which is the most creditable that an author can possess, the quality of originality. He has been accused of many high crimes and misdemeanours against literary art, but he has never been accused of plagiarism. Dilettante criticism may consider his work a poor thing, but it is his own in material, form, and treatment. Few writers of fiction have owed such a trifling debt to their predecessors; and he derived little from history and biography. The England of his time was his library. As Mr. Chesterton says, he was "the last cry of merry England."

The charges most frequently brought against Dickens are those of exaggeration and sentimentality. In the latter quality he was, as Swinburne suggests, not for all time but for an age. In regard to exaggeration, it must be remembered that, even thirty years ago, one might go about London with a sketch-book and fill it with portraits of Dickens types taken from life. Any novelist could have found them "if he had the mind." Novelists can still find them, and sometimes do. Who could exaggerate the types seen on Derby Day? In the "Pickwick" period one may fancy that England was entirely populated by Dickens characters. The London of that time is preserved in the thousands of etchings by George Cruikshank. He, like Dickens, saw through the spectacles of the humorist; but there was little need to caricature where so much was grotesque. No one who in comparatively recent times has enjoyed the edifying conversation of a London bus-driver will ever say that Tony Weller is overdrawn. To perpetrate one of those paradoxes which almost seem to mean something, it was not Dickens who exaggerated England, but England that exaggerated Dickens.

THE DEVIL-DRUM

by

B. WILLOUGHBY

ILLUSTRATED BY S. H. VEDDER

O-O-M . . . oom-oom. O-o-m . . . oom-oom. O-o-m . . . oom-oom . . .

Up from the kashim, the underground council-house, came the beat of the devil-drum pulsing hollow and strange through the scream of the gale and the rumble of icebergs grinding below the snow-buried Eskimo village.

O-o-m . . . oom-oom. O-o-m . . . oom-oom. O-o-m. . . .

Ah-king-ah, the medicine-man, was trying to change the wind. Day and night for two moons the Polar blizzard had split its force on the bleak island pyramid thrusting up through the ice of Bering Strait. It was a wind of death—a devil's wind, piling floe on floe until the ice grounded, yet keeping it ever astir. No life could exist beneath the pack or on top of it, and in the igloos clinging to the white slope of the shore the people, unable to hunt, were facing starvation.

O-o-m . . . oom-oom. O-o-m . . . oom-oom. O-o-m . . . oom-oom. . . .

In a temporary lull the hollow rhythm grew louder, penetrating the walls of the missionary's igloo where he, the only white man on the island, sat alone before a table clutching an open book with both mittened hands. The twilight of the Arctic noon made no impression on the thick frost-crust of the window, but the wan rays of a kerosene lamp fell on the volume and on the missionary's grey hair showing above the dropped hood of his reindeer parka. With every breath a shaft of vapour clouded the chill air, for his supply of driftwood had vanished while the blizzard was in its first month; and after he had shared his oil with the village families there was little left for use in his Eskimo heating lamp.

The reverberation of the devil-drum was suddenly pierced by the wail of a wolf-dog dying under the teeth of its hunger-maddened mates. The man raised sunken eyes, blue and fervid with a terrible anxiety, and listened. The sounds of cannibalistic ravening sent a tremor through his body.

He flattened his palms on the open Bible and strained his thin face upward in desperate supplication. "God—Father—*Change the wind!*" During a moment's silence his gaze remained fixed on something beyond the blackened ceiling of the igloo, beyond the driven ice-dust of the blizzard. Then, in a voice that gathered confidence as he proceeded, he filled the room with ringing phrases from the Book:—

"And he caused an east wind to blow in the heavens and by his power he brought in the south wind.

"He rained flesh also upon them as dust and feathered fowls as sands of the sea.

"And he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations.

"So they did eat and were well filled."

O-o-m . . . oom-oom. O-o-m . . . oom-oom. O-o-m . . . oom-oom . . . the devil-drum beat a barbarous amen.

"They did eat and were well filled!" The missionary closed the Bible and firmly, as one who has found new courage, repeated the words in the Eskimo tongue. He rose from the table and crossed over to a corner where a canned-milk box did duty as a cupboard. From the curled bacon rind that hung there he cut a thin slice and slipped it hungrily into his mouth. Chewing a bit of it eased the gnawing in his stomach, which had not yet grown accustomed to one meal a day—a ration made necessary since he had divided the last of his provisions with the village.

Opening a door at the back of the igloo, he made his stooping way into another larger room—the school-house and church his own hands had built so hopefully six months before. Under his stiff fingers the light flared up from a bracket lamp, revealing a small wall-blackboard which had never known a chalk mark, and the yellow lumber of benches that had yet to feel the contact of Eskimo garments. He had come north to teach and christianize a people that wanted neither teaching nor Christianity.

In the beginning the Eskimos had treated him with the good-natured tolerance of their race. They accepted his presents, ate his food, and begged or borrowed from him in accordance with their code : *The white man who outwits us is a better man than we, and we admire him ; the white man we outwit is a fool.* The unsuspecting little missionary, confident that he was making great strides into their friendship, was unusually generous; but the moment he tried to preach the word of his God, the moment he attempted to interfere with their customs, he found himself up against a glacial wall of resentment.

" Leave us alone ! Leave us alone ! " Milli-ru-ak, the hunter, had said to him in the squirrel-hunting season when the missionary went to remonstrate with him for biting off the nose of his wife's lover. " Leave us alone ! Does the Eskimo force his way on the white man who invades his country ? Why does the white man force his way on the Eskimo ? Leave us alone ! "

" But, Milli-ru-ak—to bite off the nose of thy neighbour——"

" Listen, white man, to the law of my fathers ! " The hunter's dark eyes narrowed. " Had my neighbour come to me and said : ' Milli-ru-ak, thy woman hath found favour in my eyes. Let us change wives during the squirrel-hunting, that our families may be allied when the children are born,' then would I have been proud that my neighbour should have taken his pleasure with my wife and I with his. But my neighbour was without honour. He waited until I was gone to the hunt, then like a thief he goes to my woman. I found him there. I bit off his nose. Such," said Milli-ru-ak, turning on his heel, " was the just law of my fathers."

Aghast at this disclosure, the little missionary persistently attempted to convince the hunter of his sins, and after a week Milli-ru-ak shot at him—by accident. The bullet passed harmlessly between the white man's arm and his body, embedding itself in the shaky pulpit he was building at the time. He could see the splintered hole now as he placed his open Bible upon it and reached for the dangling bell-rope behind the pulpit.

The *ding-dong* that marked the Sabbath day was caught up by the blizzard and carried with the boom of the devil-drum out over the Polar wastes. Every Sunday and Wednesday since the completion of the meeting-house the missionary had doggedly rung the first and second bell summoning an indifferent people to listen to the word of his God. Not a soul had ever responded.

He rang the first bell longer than usual. Now that the magic of Ah-king-ah had failed to change the wind, now that the dogs were starving and the people were eating the last of the mouldy seal-meat originally intended for the animals, surely, he thought, they were ready to abandon their ways of darkness for the light of Christianity.

He allowed the bell-rope to fall and poured a drop of oil from a deflated seal-skin container into the stone lamp in the middle of the floor. When the flame flared up from the moss wick he held his hands over it. Not for himself would he have used any of the precious oil, but he hoped that some curious Eskimo might come and, seeing the fire, spread the news of it in the village. The people might come to him then, since there was no oil in the native igloos—no oil for heating, no oil for melting ice for water,

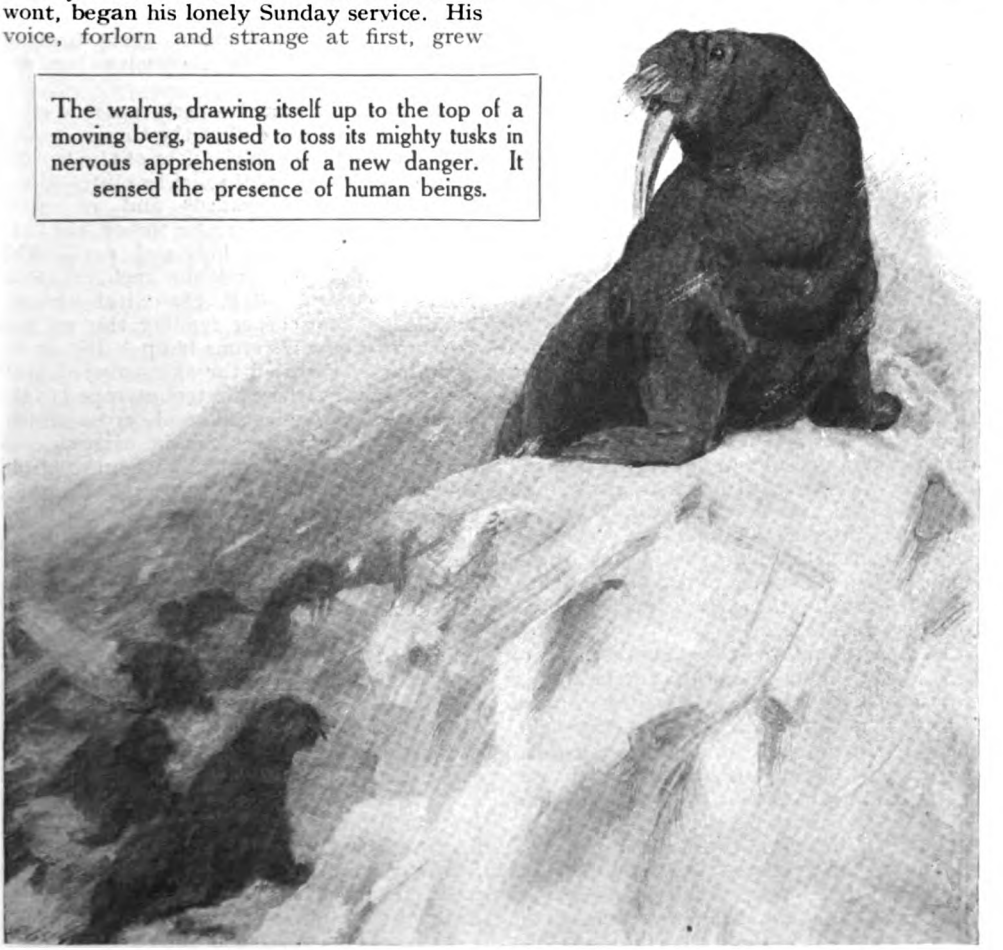
no oil for cooking the mouldy seal-meat. Only the medicine-man had oil now.

The dogs outside had quieted and the voice of Ah-king-ah's drum alone rode the gale. The little missionary, squatting over the lamp, kept turning his thin, expectant face toward the outside door. He was always looking for it to open, but it never had. Fifteen minutes dragged by before he rose and rang the second bell.

Across the vapour of his breath the rows of clean new benches reproached him with their emptiness, and from the bare wooden walls frost-pegs on every nail-head pointed at him like accusing white fingers. He turned slowly and, mounting the pulpit, stood, his hands on the open Bible, his blue eyes looking down wistfully on the cheerless room. The smoky bracket lamp behind him threw his shadow, long and grotesque, across the bare benches as if in pity trying to cover them. The sound of the devil-drum filtered in faint, taunting, but the missionary cleared his throat and, as was his wont, began his lonely Sunday service. His voice, forlorn and strange at first, grew firmer as he proceeded. By and by it quite shut out the insolence of the devil-drum.

At the end he closed his Bible and turned out the light. There was a dispirited sag to his narrow shoulders as he went back to his living-room. To-day, because death was so near to them all, the Eskimos' animal-like indifference to himself and his message made him feel small and forsaken—made him ache with the terrible longing of a lonely white man for his kind. For a moment he stood uncertain, his breath clouding the cold, stale atmosphere of the igloo; then, with the air of one banishing personal weaknesses, he shoved his parka hood over his head, drew the long fur about his face, and made his way out through the snow tunnel leading from his door to the open.

The pallor of the Arctic noon was filled with frost-dust borne on wind of such velocity that its passing was like the whiz of speeding bullets. Through the fur about his face the man peered at the ice-pack



The walrus, drawing itself up to the top of a moving berg, paused to toss its mighty tusks in nervous apprehension of a new danger. It sensed the presence of human beings.

lying like a grey monster below him. Stationary it appeared at first, but as his eyes grew accustomed to the murky light it became a thing of horrid life, heaving, quivering, forming itself into grotesque shapes with a slowness that was as sinister and relentless as death.

He felt puny, insignificant, cruelly at the mercy of that tremendous wind which was blowing the ice-pack down from the Pole and maliciously grounding it in the shallow waters of the Strait.

Far out on the pack where death was certain a dark thing moved. It drew near the village—a great bull walrus scouting vainly for leads of open water that meant life to the small herd wallowing along in its wake. The scout rolled its three thousand pounds from side to side over the moving ice, dexterously fastening its tusks into the base of each berg and pulling itself to the top. On the pinnacle it reared still higher on its flippers, sniffing the air, tusked head swaying, short-sighted eyes trying to pierce the thick atmosphere. A moment of decision, and through the stridor of the elements a bellowing grunt rumbled deep and lone, signalling the advance of the herd. The valiant creature wallowed on from point to point of vantage, progressing through the zone of constant and terrible danger with a courageous dignity that won admiration even from the hungry missionary who saw it as food, heat, life itself.

Opposite the village the walrus escaped the buckling of the ice by a hair's breadth, and, drawing itself up to the top of a moving berg, paused longer than usual to toss its mighty tusks in nervous apprehension of a new danger. Just as the berg began to topple it sensed the presence of human beings and sent its wild trumpetings to warn the herd. The gallant animal, too late to take any thought for itself, plunged recklessly. A patch of black in the gaping angle between two floes, a slow closing of the frigid trap, and a long-drawn despairing roar wove itself through the hissing of the wind and the booming of the devil-drum. As it died away the ice was marked by a seeping red stain.

The herd, panic-stricken at the loss of their leader, flung themselves forward to destruction, leaving crushed bodies to mark a spotted trail of death across the ice-field.

The last terror-driven creature was disappearing in the haze of the blizzard when a bent Eskimo battled his way down from the kashim to the edge of the heaving ice. He sheltered himself in the lee of a floe, looking long at the evidences of tragedy before him. Three wolf-dogs, scenting the blood, came out from under the snow and sat on their haunches to send their hunger-cry keening through the glimmering twilight. Starving though they were, neither man nor beasts dared venture over the few feet that lay between them and the meat tantalizing them on the creeping ice.

"Oh, God! Father! Change the wind!" prayed the missionary.

"*O-o-m . . . oom-oom. O-o-m . . . oom-oom. O-o-m . . . oom oom . . .*" propitiated the devil-drum of Ah-king-ah.

WHEN the white man saw the Eskimo he started. Then, tightening the hood of his parka against the stinging ice-dust, he began creeping cautiously away towards the sound of the drum. With every backward glance he quickened his progress. At last he would be able to enter the tunnel of the kashim while the guard was absent from his post, for, though the missionary's presence had been tolerated in the igloos, he had never yet succeeded in forcing his way into the council-house. He had convinced himself that once in the kashim, where he could address the assembled village, he could persuade them to abandon their heathen incantations and fling themselves on the mercy of God.

He pressed forward eagerly until a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel guided him to the opening in the floor of the kashim above. With a gasp of relief he clutched the ladder that led upwards and mounted. He was not observed as he thrust his head into the dim room, hot and rank with ammoniacal smells and the reek of close-packed bodies. Miak, the witch-woman, huddled in one corner tending the wick of the medicine-man's stone lamp. Its smoky light barely revealed the skin-covered shelf about the walls where hunters, stripped to the waist, sat cross-legged and cross-armed, their Mongolian faces set in earnest concentration. On the floor below them squatted the women and the old men and the quiet children, naked as fishes.

All eyes were on Ah-king-ah, the medicine-man; Ah-king-ah, who had successfully defied the christianizing efforts of two former missionaries. Many were the tales told of the man's cunning and of his strength, not only among the Eskimo tribes, but among the whalers and the white traders of the Arctic. Ah-king-ah was a son of the Wind. Ah-king-ah flew to the Moon on the rays of the ice-blink. Once he flew to Siberia and challenged Nan-kum, the one-eyed shaman of the Chuckchees, to battle for the supremacy of the North. Had not all the village seen them fighting over the Strait one morning—two great black crows whose raucous screams sent chills to the hearts of the bravest hunters? Mightiest shaman of the North was Ah-king-ah! With

his beak he had wrenched off the leg of Nan-kum and flung it to the ice, cawing triumphantly while the cripple flapped away defeated to Asiatic shores. Had not Milli-ru-ak found the leg where it fell, and was it not the leg of a man? And did not hunters returning from Siberian tundras report Nan-kum hobbling about on one leg ever after? Great indeed was Ah-king-ah, the medicine-man, and greater still would he be when he had changed the wind that was bringing famine to In-ga-lee-nay—greater and richer, for his price would be half the fruits of the village hunt for the space of six hunting moons!

The missionary's eyes fell upon Ah-king-ah, half-crouching in the middle of the floor. He was six feet tall, and nude except for a short transparent garment made of the intestines of seals and trimmed with the crimson beaks of sea-parrots. He was beating upon the sacred devil-drum and chanting runes treating of the secret things of spirits while his slim, naked feet made weird passes and performed strange, halting steps. With every movement his superb brown body rippled beneath the transparent shirt, setting all the beaks clattering in measured cadence. Behind him sat his three apprentices, swaying their naked bodies as they thumped the floor with sticks adorned with wolf-tails and gull-wings.

A sudden, sinuous motion and Ah-king-ah was facing the west. The drum began a soft rolling accompaniment to his rising, long-drawn croon. The tawny torsos of the hunters, moving to and fro from the hips, caught the light in zigzag waves.

Ah-king-ah's tones grew louder, the *tempo* of the drum quickened and its sound swelled until it became the voice of the wind, the thunder of crashing seas, the expression of Nature in all her moods of fury. Swaying bodies responded. The people began to shout, to vent queer cries in unison, urging the shaman to greater efforts, deeper magic. Excitement grew until it was a very frenzy of earnestness that increased the heat of the kashim and started the sweat on the sixty bodies packed there. The reek of them was sickening; the deluge of sounds deafening.

SUDDENLY everything stopped. Ah-king-ah grew rigid. While the jade and amber beads dangling from the plugs in his lower lip quivered into life, his dark face took on the look of a demon. He flung out his arms, raised his chin, and sent an intonation soaring through the din of the gale.

"Thou, Almighty Devil——"

"Stop!" The small figure of the missionary catapulted to the middle of the room, one arm outstretched, one thin finger extended. "Stop, blasphemer!" he shouted, lost to all sense of danger in the fervour of his religious indignation. "Servant of Satan! Son of Belial! Wouldst thou anger God by thy sacrilege?" His pale eyes flashed in his twitching face, his accusing finger trembled. "God alone is mighty! God alone is good! Oh, poor deluded ones"—he turned pleadingly to the stunned and wondering people—"shut your ears to the evils of this sorcerer! Turn to the true God, and the blizzard will die and you shall have meat in your starving village!"

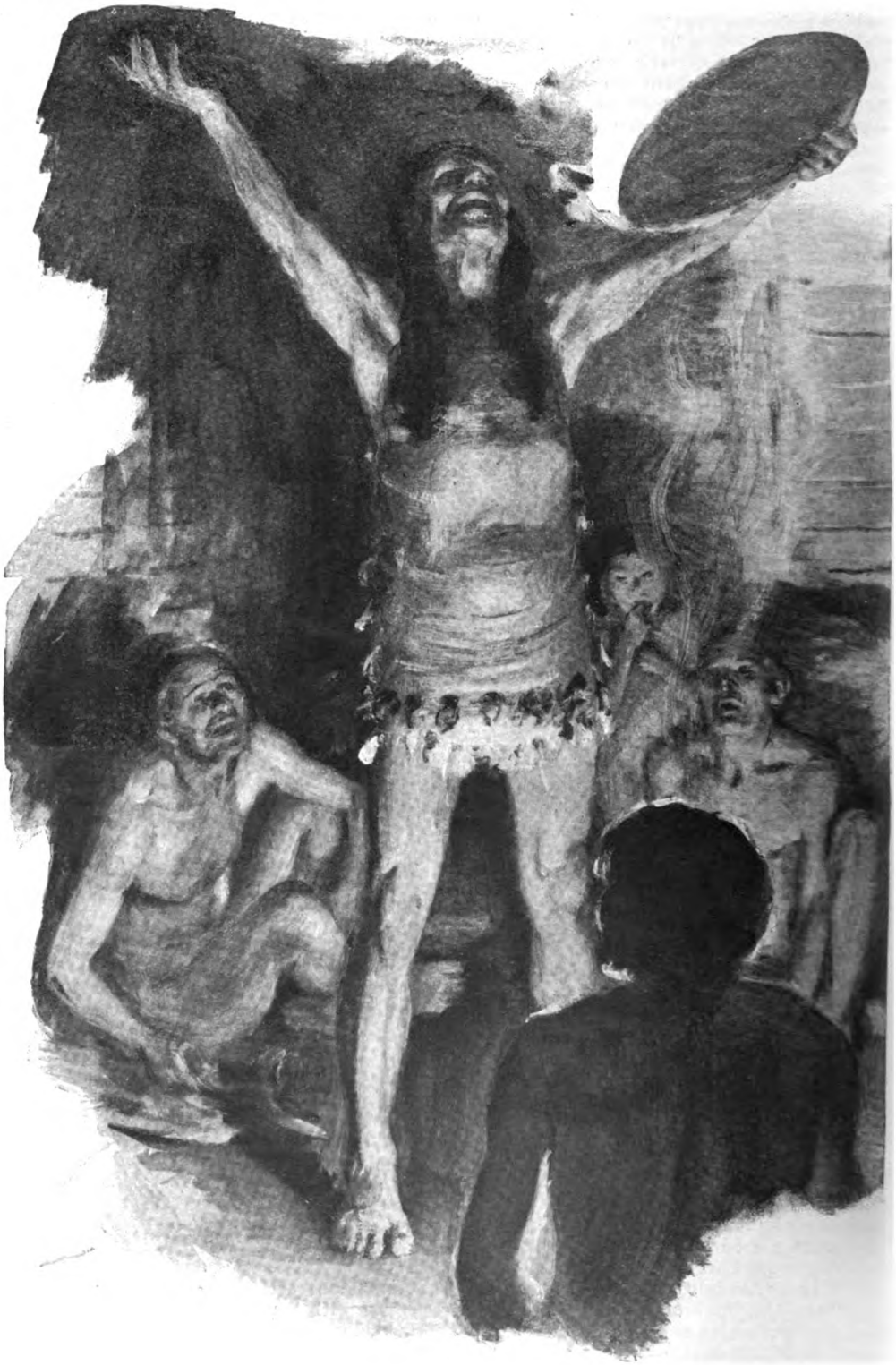
In the smoky light the astonished expressions on the dark faces changed. They grew sullen, grew threatening, in a silence that was pregnant with hostility. One wolf-step brought Ah-king-ah close to the white man, who became dwarfed and insignificant beside the powerful Eskimo. Ah-king-ah's voice rang deep and mellow and supremely exalted after the thin, excited tones of the missionary.

"The white man has spoken, my brothers. But—did we of In-ga-lee-nay ask him for this God whom he says we insult? The white man has broken in upon us. He has crossed the sign that warns all strangers from our council-house. He has spoken. Listen now to Ah-king-ah and compare the wisdom of our tongues." He paused until the murmur of approval went around the hunters' shelf. "Well ye know that our people have lived on In-ga-lee-nay for ten times a thousand moons, happy in the customs of the ancient ones. Well ye know that our island and the waters about our island have ever been the abode of plenty—the breeding-place of birds, the dwelling-place of land-creatures, the home of sea-creatures. In all the land of the Innuits no village has been so favoured by the spirits. In no village but thine could a man sit in his doorway and shoot enough seals to give a feast."

The hunters grunted assent and gravely nodded their heads above their folded arms.

"Yea, my brothers, in the old time ye were happy. Your bellies were rounded and well filled. Skins of oil hung from your ceilings and oil in plenty burned in the lamps of your igloos. This was the happy way of life under the wise laws of your fathers." Ah-king-ah shifted his drum from one hip to the other and resumed with quickened utterance:—

"Then comes this white man from the South. Uninvited he pushes his way into your igloos with the words of his God. He comes with the ringing of the bell that is bad medicine in the ears of the Almighty Devil, tossing in his hands the ivory ball of the



world. Then, my brothers, from the Place of Winds, strange evils have come upon you. Why ? Why, my brothers ? "

He allowed a moment's silence before he leaned forward and whispered slowly in a way that left the room ringing :—

"The—Almighty—Devil—is—angry—with -you ! "

In the hush that followed the sound of the blizzard seeped in through the thick walls. Ah-king-ah suddenly flung himself upright, and continued in a voice that gathered volume as he proceeded : " The Almighty Devil is angry with you for hearkening to new words. Behold, your bellies grow flat against your backs. Your igloos grow cold. Your dogs consume each other. Oh, hear the words of

"Oh, poor deluded ones"—he turned pleadingly to the stunned and wondering people—"shut your ears to the evils of this sorcerer."

Ah-king-ah, my brothers, whom the spirits have taught concerning these things of mystery." The shaman wheeled, and with a quick, accusing finger transfixed the missionary. "It is because of this white man and his ringing bell that the Devil is angry!" he shouted. "Wherefore I say let this white man take his God back to his own kind—back to the land of his fathers!" The words rose to a shriek. "Let him take his God back to the land of his fathers!"

The muttering of the crowd broke loose in a yelling frenzy as men, women, and children took up the cry. In the seething, sweating mass of humanity the missionary's protests were lost, but the dauntless little man wrested himself from the hands of the medicine-man's apprentices, snatched the drum from the great Ah-king-ah himself, and leaped to the now empty shelf of the kashim.

"Wait! Wait!" he commanded. His fist banged the devil-drum, which none but a shaman might touch on penalty of death. The very magnitude of the sacrilege bludgeoned the people into an aghast silence. "For the sake of thy starving women and children, listen to the words of the white man's God. In the Book of which I have told you it is written: 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do!' Oh, poor benighted ones, pray to God for help and He will answer. For two months ye have watched Ah-king-ah with his devil tricks trying to change the wind. His words are a lie within his mouth! His sorceries are an abomination to the Lord. His——"

A lightning movement and Ah-king-ah had snatched the drum to him. "We do not know this man's God, and we don't want to know Him!" The shaman's mighty voice extinguished the missionary's. "Let the white man take his God back to the land of his fathers!" The rumble of the drum began, and the shaman's feet resumed their weird passes. Again and again he repeated the words. His rhythmic chanting and the booming of the drum woke the mob spirit in the people. The yelling crowd that surged threateningly toward the missionary was led by Milli-ru-ak, who leaped to the shelf and crooked his avid fingers about the white man's throat.

"Stop, my brothers!" The medicine-man's authoritative voice rang out. He had ceased his capering and there was a light of apprehension in his wary eyes. "Milli-ru-ak, lay thy hands off. It is not well that the people of In-ga-lee-nay do violence to such as he, for well ye know how the long arm of the white man's law reaches even from the South, where the sun sinks under the world, to the North, where the water ends. Have ye forgotten the fate of the three medicine-men, Sautock, Beelack, and O-tock-tock in the year of the Red Death? They did but bind the man O'Ryan until his spirit fled—the strange man O'Ryan who swung the little cup of smoke before his God and wore a long garment with a cross about his neck. Remember, my brothers, how there came high chiefs from the South, mighty in anger and with stars on their breasts glittering like the fishes' scales! Remember how they hanged Sautock, Beelack, and O-tock-tock high on the slope behind the village! Have ye the minds of children that ye can forget the long moons their bones rattled in the chains as the east wind lipped them? I, Ah-king-ah, to whom spirits whisper, tell ye it is not well that we do violence to a white man"—he woke again the rumbling rhythm of the drum—"but let him leave us in peace to practise the ways of our fathers. Let him take his God back to his own land!"

"Yea! Yea!" The people took up the words in a clamouring chorus while the shaman's three apprentices seized the protesting missionary and carried him to the opening in the floor. One of them placed his feet on the ladder. The other two pressed him down rung by rung, until he found himself on the floor of the tunnel, where the sulphurous eyes of starving dogs menaced him in the gloom.

He stood uncertain for a moment while the *oom-oom* of the devil-drum rolled in his ears. Then blindly he groped and beat his way along the slippery passage.

"Oh, Thou, Almighty Devil——" The propitiatory chant of Ah-king-ah followed him out into the blizzard.

DAY after day the blizzard continued unabated. The supply of mouldy seal-meat dwindled, vanished. The people began eating the walrus-skin coverings of their oomiaks. They chewed the hide dry because there was no oil for cooking except in the house of the medicine-man. The thin-faced children and babies suffered mutely, sucking on seal-skin ropes, on thongs of snow-shoes, on anything that contained a bit of nourishment.

Hunger gnawed at the stomachs of the people and marked their faces with hollows, yet there were no lamentations, no visible evidences of despair. After the manner of their race they waited patiently, stoically, for a change of weather—or for death.

One night the old mother of Miak, the witch-woman, froze to death. The next day every family moved to the kashim, where, by shutting out the air and huddling close together, the people could keep warm

without oil. Once a day Ah-king-ah brought them hope and comfort by lighting the stone lamp and chanting magical words to the Almighty Devil.

The missionary in his igloo spent desperate hours on his knees pleading with his God to change the wind. In the darkness he paced his room, warming his thin body by the exercise and striving for courage by repeating over and over the promises of the Bible. Sternly he reduced the rations for his scant daily meal until hunger brought upon him that strange fanatical exaltation which is akin to the ecstasy that causes the fasting prophet to prophesy, or the medicine-man to perform his greatest feats of magic. With the passage of each dreary day the conviction grew upon him that this unprecedented blizzard had been sent to test his zeal as a worker in the vineyard of the Lord. This blizzard was his opportunity to win an entire village from the heathen sway of the medicine-man. With every atom of his being he grew to believe that if once he could persuade the people to enter the meeting-house, if once he could induce them to pray to his God, the wind would die and the hunters be able to get food.

This conviction forced him every afternoon through the gale to the kashim. He ignored every rebuff, ignored utterly the danger to himself, although he knew that Ah-king-ah, should he forget the fate of the priest-murdering medicine-men, might have him killed as a witch who had brought misfortune on the village. Sometimes, by dint of superhuman self-denial, he brought bits of hard-tack for the strangely quiet little ones clinging to their mothers in the kashim. Always he pleaded with the elders to turn from shamanism to the true God. The Eskimos, apathetic from prolonged hunger, suffered his presence. While he was with them there was at least the light of his kerosene lantern. Otherwise the kashim was always in darkness now, for Ah-king-ah's oil was gone.

Construing this tolerance as an encouraging sign, the earnest little man brought his Bible; and, standing under the swinging light of the lantern, he translated page after page of Exodus—the promises of the Lord to the children of Israel; the feeding of the wanderers in the desert. But the Eskimos sat stolid, unmoved, apathetic. Even his ardent rendering of the miracle of the loaves and fishes fell flat. Ah-king-ah, as if in weary scorn of his rival, stretched himself on the skins of his shelf and slept—or appeared to sleep.

One day, by accident, the missionary read of the magicians and sorcerers who competed with Moses and Aaron at the Court of the Egyptian Pharaoh. Milli-ru-ak raised his eyes from a sad contemplation of his ailing infant son asleep in its mother's arms. Miak, the witch-woman, leaned forward over her empty lamp to listen. A stir of interest went among the people. Here at last was something they could understand.

The white man had heretofore preached only a kind and beneficent God, but seeing in this an opening in the wall of their indifference, he plunged into detailed descriptions of the misfortunes that had visited the Egyptians. His gaunt face and sunken eyes glowed with fervour. Hunger lent a delirious and terrible vividness to his speech. Vicariously the starving Eskimos were drowned in his Biblical rivers of blood. They were tormented by plagues of frogs and boils, locusts and lice. They were terrified by hails and thunders. Aware of the Eskimos' almost idolatrous love for their offspring, he loosed his tongue of all restraint when he pictured the smiting of the first-born. To the sound of the howling blizzard he dwelt long on the pathos of the dead childish faces in those desolate homes along the Nile. Ah-king-ah bestirred himself and sat up. There was a murmuring among the hunters. The mothers caught their children to their breasts and swayed back and forth moaning.

The missionary, light-headed from hunger and emotion, reeled under the swinging shadows of the lantern. "Would ye, like the Egyptians, harden your hearts against the word of God and bring death to your children?" he shouted. "Oh, come, my friends! Come with me before your little ones lie dead in your arms! Pray to Almighty God and be delivered! Follow me before it is too late!" Carried away by the effect of his eloquence on the hitherto indifferent Eskimos, he caught at the lantern and lurched forward toward the exit of the kashim. "Follow me to the house of God!"

The mothers rose with hysterical cries. The hunters began to get down from their shelf. But before the missionary had reached the ladder Ah-king-ah was standing in the middle of the floor. Calm and dignified, he made a single motion with one hand. Not a soul followed the white man.

THE next day when the missionary climbed to the opening of the kashim he found the hole covered. His knocks and pleas met with no response, because Ah-king-ah was sitting on the door to hold it down.

Night brought a drop in temperature and an increase in the force of the gale. The grinding and crash of the ice-pack seemed to threaten the very foundations of the island. With the exception of the missionary, every soul on In-ga-lee-nay was packed in the

kashim. Men, women, and children chewed desperately on dry walrus hide and clung together to keep from freezing. The little ones whimpered in misery. At last the wretched company, weary from many wakeful nights, jerked and flung their arms about in troubled sleep.

When morning broke Milli-ru-ak's child was dead.

The wailing of the mothers mingled with the roar of the blizzard and the increased fervour of the medicine-man's incantations, but before the day was done two more little ones died.

It was then that Milli-ru-ak, with three of the council-men, appeared in the igloo of the white man.

"We will pray to your God," said the hunter, wearily.

THE peals of the bell that summoned the people to the prayer-meeting were freighted with the little missionary's joy in the fulfilment of his mission. He had wrested a whole village from the dominance of the medicine-man!

The sunken eyes in his gaunt, unshaved face glowed with fanatic happiness as he looked down on the crowded room. Eskimos filled the benches, stood about the walls, and squatted on the floor about the last of his oil burning in the stone lamp below the pulpit. Of all the village only Ah-king-ah was absent. The people sat silent, grave, attentive, their eyes fixed on the Bible lying open on the pulpit.

The missionary began his exhortation, raising his voice above the raging of the blizzard and the rending of the ice-pack. Thrilled by a sense of achievement and inspired by faith, he spoke with a confidence and an eloquence he had never known before. Within him woke the spirit of the evangelist. So exalted was he that his preaching aroused a measure of faith in the starving Eskimos, even as the incantations of Ah-king-ah had done.

"Such is the might and goodness of our God!" he shouted, after he had combed the Bible for incidents showing the stilling of storms, the feeding of the hungry, the raising of the dead. "And He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever! Oh, down on your knees, my friends!" he cried, with sudden vehemence. "Down on your knees and prove him now—*now!*"

His impassioned utterance swept his listeners to their knees, shouting, praying, pleading, in long fragmentary prayers for food, for life, for a change of wind. The fervid little white man leading them felt the whole room to be charged with power—an invincible power that flowed from him and from each one and definitely made its connection with the Infinite Mind that rules creation.

When he sprang to his feet at the end of the supplication his thin face was alight. "Go home, my people!" his voice rang out with confidence. "Go home and wait on the salvation of our Lord. Sharpen your spears; put an edge on your skinning-knives. Make ready your gears—for the day of hunting is near!"

"If the white man's God answers we will all become Christians!" cried Milli-ru-ak, rising and bringing the others with him.

"Yea! Yea!" came the chorus of assent. Miak, the witch-woman, sidled close to the pulpit, putting out a curious but cautious finger to feel the Bible.

"If the white man's God changes the wind," she croaked, slanting a wise, bleary eye up at the missionary, "the people of In-ga-lee-nay will come when the bell calls and listen again to the words in the black medicine-book."

From the supreme heights of his faith the missionary watched his fur-clad congregation depart, seeing in them brands he had plucked from the burning, souls he had saved from destruction. Finally, in his cold living-room, he staggered toward his bunk and in sudden exhaustion sank upon it. He had scarcely drawn the fur robes about him when he was plunged into a heavy, dreamless sleep.

HE awoke to a hush so intense that his soul ached with it. It was as if the world had died, leaving him the only living thing upon it. After a moment's bewilderment he realized that the wind was still and there was no sound of grinding ice! His nerves, for ten weeks made taut by the continuous shriek of the blizzard, relaxed with a suddenness that was like a fall from a great height. Like a man swimming in a sea of silence he raised his hands, groping for the luminous-faced watch by his bunk. He saw, with a gasp of incredulity, that he had slept eighteen hours!

Still dazed with sleep and hunger, he crawled from his robes and hurried out into the glimmering twilight of the Arctic day. Great as was his faith in the power of prayer, he was astonished at the sight that met his eyes.

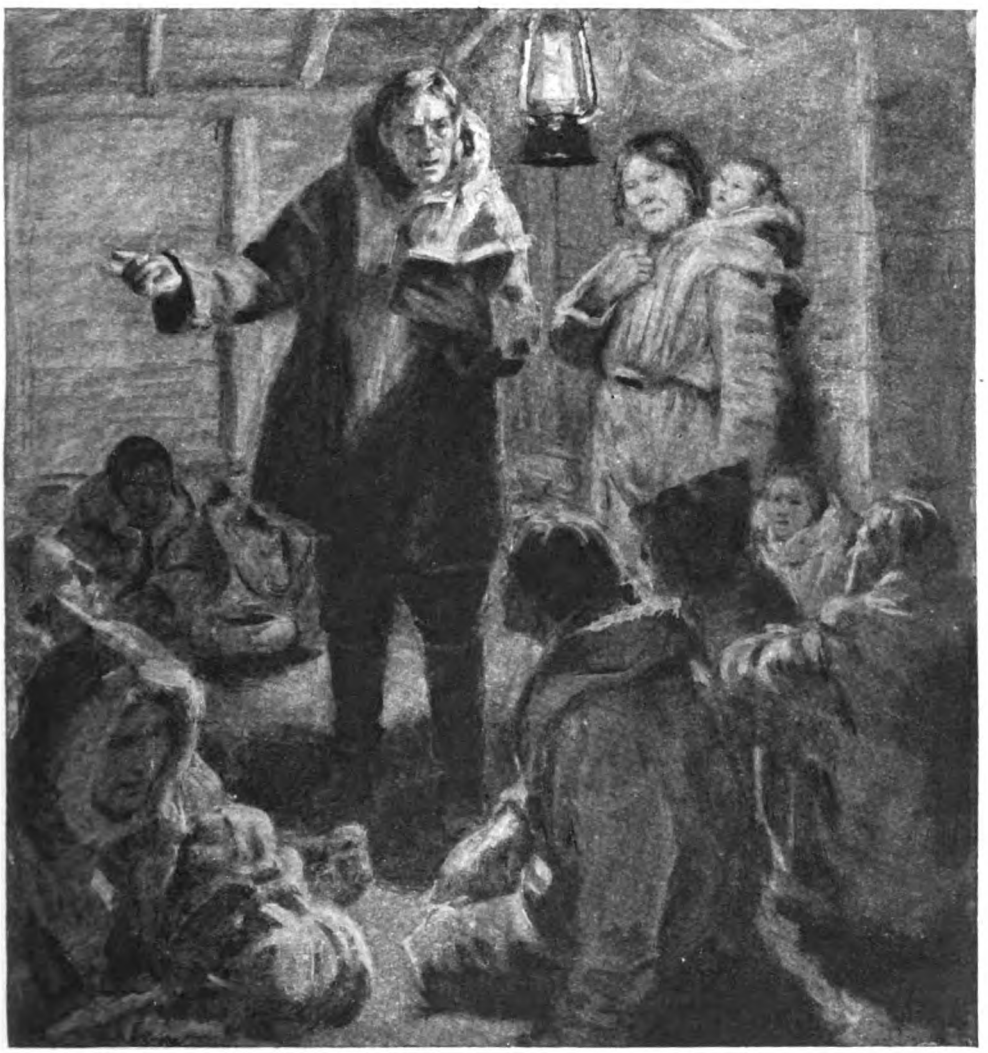
Under dark moving clouds strangely shot with silver the ice-pack lay quiet and grey. A quarter of a mile away an inky, jagged line marked a lead of open water among the bergs. Every hunter in the village was squatted along the lead, and, as he looked, a sudden fusillade of rifle-shots registered the death of seals coming up to breathe.

Along the shores women and children and old men swarmed, laughing, shouting,

as someone threw a seal-hook into a dead animal and drew it to the ice. They crowded about it, their excited yells increasing. Five minutes later they were devouring the steaming flesh, stopping often to toss bits to the dogs, who gulped it ravenously.

The missionary bowed his head, a great gratitude, a great wonder in his heart. God had listened. God had heard. The famine was over.

Like the blizzard, that day's hunting was unprecedented in In-ga-lee-nay. Thirty seals and a sixty-foot whale fell to the lot of the hunters. There was food in abundance and oil for the lamps and for the torches that fluttered yellow lights over the ice-bound shores where the people worked joyously over the kill. All day the missionary moved among them. He was happy, elated. They were his flock, his children. In the flush of his joy he had to exercise considerable self-control to keep from calling attention to the glory of God's mercy. The following day—Saturday—was also filled with unusual activities, but he permitted himself to speak of the meeting of thanksgiving which he would hold for them on Sunday. The Eskimos nodded and laughed in answer to his enthusiasm. Light-hearted, variable, they had already



He brought his Bible and, standing under the swinging light of the lantern, translated page after page.

forgotten the misery of the famine in the plenitude of feasting.

But the children with whom he had divided his last hard-tack came shyly to his side and took hold of his hands. They had not forgotten. The little missionary had not realized his utter loneliness, his craving for friendship, for love, until he felt the clinging of their small bare fingers.

His vision was blurred as, one by one, he gathered them up in his arms and talked to them. Here indeed was his work among these benighted little ones and their parents. Here would he stay as long as he lived, teaching them the ways of truth and civilization. His last thought that night was of the meeting-house on the morrow filled with grateful Eskimos sending up their praises to God. Perhaps even Ah-king-ah, the defeated, might come to listen to the Holy Word and become converted.

SUNDAY morning found him up early preparing his sermon. He melted ice, and for the first time for many weeks was able to shave. As he lighted the blubber lamps to heat the meeting-house, he noted a small pair of fur mittens left by some child who had accompanied its mother to the first gathering. He picked them up and placed them on the pulpit, intending to return them later. The thought of the youngster sent him to the bottom of his trunk for the flag he always carried with him. He could not begin too soon to familiarize the little ones with their country's flag, he thought, as he pinned it above the blackboard in anticipation of the near day when the people should send their children to school.

He rang the first bell, and then busied himself with a rearrangement of the benches. Engrossed in happy thoughts, he did not realize how swiftly time was passing until he glanced at his watch. Half an hour had gone by since his call to meeting! Apprehension stirred in him as he reached for the cord to ring the second bell, but before his outstretched fingers touched it, he stiffened in the attitude of arrested action.

O-o-m . . . oom-oom. O-o-m . . . oom-oom. O-o-m . . . oom-oom . . . The air suddenly began vibrating to the deep boom of the devil-drum. His hand fell to his side. Incredulity, comprehension, anger succeeded each other in his face. Without pausing to tighten his parka hood he rushed out into the calm Arctic noon, and ran toward the kashim tunnel.

Beat of drum and pagan chanting grew louder as he thrust his head up through the opening in the floor which was once more the stage for Ah-king-ah. Behind the shaman stood Milli-ru-ak with the three whale-hunters who had helped him kill the whale. Bird-beaks and crab-claws on their scanty garments were clattering to every motion of their dancing bodies. Their feathered heads swayed above whale-charms of jade that dangled on cords about their necks. Four Eskimo maidens in primitive finery stood together holding by its ivory chains the Ceremonial Cup of the Whale filled with blubber cubes. At intervals, when the medicine-man signalled, they held the cup aloft and uttered long, weird cries like gulls.

The people who had so recently prostrated themselves in supplication before the white man's God were now as fervently assisting Ah-king-ah in the ancient rites of thanksgiving to the Spirit of the Whale.

At sight of the missionary the dancing and chanting ceased instantly. Ah-king-ah took a confident step forward.

"Why does the white man bring his long face here to anger the spirits of the hunt?" he asked.

The missionary's sunken eyes passed slowly over the faces of the hunters squatted on the shelf, over the faces of the mothers and of the old men and the children below. His anger ebbed to a great hopelessness that showed in the weary sag of his shoulders. He was defeated, yet he climbed to the floor of the kashim and stood beside the half-nude figure of the giant shaman.

"Were your words then a lie within your mouths, ye people of In-ga-lee-nay?" he asked quietly. "Ye did promise this day to send up thanks to Almighty God for His mercies. If these promises were lies, why did ye come to pray with me?"

Milli-ru-ak started forward, his eyes narrowed with anger, but the medicine-man gestured for silence.

"Listen to the words of Ah-king-ah!" He spoke with primitive dignity, his authoritative voice instantly quelling the murmur of the hunters. "It was I, Ah-king-ah, who sent my people to the kashim of the white man."

The missionary turned incredulously.

"Long had I chanted the runes that please the Almighty Devil tossing in his hands the ivory ball of the world," went on the medicine-man. "And I knew the time was ripe for fulfilment. Yet the wisdom of my fathers tells me that all things change form, even as the ice-pack changes its face in the arms of the wind. New spirits come. Old spirits die. There is sorcery in all things. Perhaps there is sorcery in the black Book the white man keeps. Perhaps there is not. But I, Ah-king-ah, maker of medicine, am not a man of wisdom if I protect not my people against it. Therefore I sent them to thee, white man, who knoweth the ways of thy God in the black Book, but before I sent

them I promised that I, Ah-king-ah, who knoweth the ways of the Almighty Devil, would stay alone working for them my strongest magic while they prayed. They know my medicine is great, for behold, the storm dies like the last grunt of the stricken walrus, and "—he drew himself up proudly, resting his drum on his thigh—"it is I, Ah-king-ah, mightiest shaman of the North, who changes the wind!"

In the approving chorus that filled the room the missionary tried to make himself heard, but Ah-king-ah's voice continued, vanquishing every other sound :—

"And why should thy God be thanked?" he asked, in the earnest manner of one seeking to understand another's view-point. "Thou hast told my people He is a good God wanting to do only good to man. Why pray to Him when He can do us no harm? But the Almighty Devil—he is evil, evil. All his pleasure comes from doing evil to man. Therefore we must sing the magic runes that please him, so he leaves us alone. Therefore we must dance before the Spirit of the Whales to show our joy at the good fortune the Devil has permitted. White man"—Ah-king-ah's shrewd dark eyes were not unkind as he looked down on the little missionary—"our ways are still the ways of our fathers. Thy ways are the ways of thy fathers. Leave us, then, and give thy thanks to whom it please thee." He raised the drum from his thigh and made a quick motion with it. As the booming sounded, the three apprentices sprang forward. Not ungently they laid hold of the missionary and led him to the opening in the floor. Then rung by rung he was forced down the ladder until his feet touched the icy cobblestones at the bottom. The trap-door dropped above him, leaving him in darkness.

As he stumbled over wolf-dogs gorged with food and indifferent with sleep, his ears rang to the thump of the devil-drum and the pagan chanting of well-fed, joyous people. The sounds followed him from the passage into the awful pervading silence of the Polar day. He dragged his forlorn figure back along the snowy trail to the meeting-house.

Past the mocking bareness of the benches, past the blackboard where the flag, loosed from three of its tacks, hung limp and dispirited, he made his way to the shaky little pulpit. He rubbed a fumbling hand across his eyes then, as a hurt child seeks the comfort of its mother's breast, his grey head sank on his folded arms, and he pressed his face against the open Bible.

Numbed by his disappointment, crushed by his failure, he lay a small defeated white man in the primitive fur garments of an alien race. Gradually into his memory began to crowd the long months of loneliness, sacrifice, privation he had borne to bring the comforts of religion and the uplift of civilization to an ungrateful heathen people. For them he had given up everything a white man holds dear. For them he had been willing to give even his life. His work had been futile. Futility! The word stood out in letters of ice against the blackness of his misery. But he was at the end. He was through. In the spring, when the first boat came from the mainland, he would leave In-ga-lee-nay. He *would* take his God back to his own land, where there was at least the companionship of his kind.

Sagging wearily against the pulpit he was oblivious to the passage of time, deaf to the increasing happy shouts from the kashim. The oil in the lamps burned away. The sputtering wicks grew black. Unconsciously one hand opening and shutting in anguish had taken hold of something soft and warm. When at last he raised his face from his cramped arms, his eyes, dull with brooding, fell on the tiny pair of mittens he had placed on the pulpit that morning.

For the space of a dozen breaths he stared at them, then slowly, meditatively, he began stroking them. Into his tired mind crept thoughts of yesterday. Children had come to him then—children with upraised, trusting eyes and warm, clinging fingers. They had come because they believed in him. They liked him. They were potential hunters and mothers of hunters. With their small clinging hands they were already moulding the future of their race.

Little by little the look of hopelessness faded from his eyes and a new determination crept into his thin face. When he stepped from the pulpit he turned and pinned the flag back into place, then hung the mittens on a nail beside it.

It was very late for the second bell, but the missionary crossed over to the bell-rope. His step was firm, his dogged chin upraised. He laid hold of the rope and began pulling it vigorously, hopefully.

OUT over the still, white bergs of Bering Strait two sounds strove once more for dominance in the Arctic air :—

O-o m . . . oom-oom. O-o-m . . . oom-oom. O-o-m . . . oom-oom . . .

D-i-n-g . . . d o-n-g. D-i-n-g . . . d-o-n-g. D-i-n-g . . . d-o-n-g . . .

HONEYSUCKLE COTTAGE

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY TREYER EVANS

JAMES RODMAN bent forward and knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

For awhile he sat, silent and pensive, staring into the fire. Then with a little, sudden movement he stooped and patted his dog William, asleep on the rug, and, leaning back, refilled his pipe and lit it. The flame of the match shone for a moment on his strong, capable face. Outside, the storm raged against the window, for it was an eerie night of howling wind and driving rain.

"Do you believe in ghosts?" he asked, abruptly.

I weighed the question thoughtfully. I was a little surprised, for nothing in our previous conversation had suggested the topic.

"Well, I don't like them, if that's what you mean. I was butted by one as a child."

"Ghosts," said James with some brusqueness. "Not goats."

"Oh! Do I believe in ghosts?"

"Exactly."

"Well, yes—and no."

"That," said James, "is a fat lot of help. I'll put it another way. Do you believe in haunted houses? Do you believe that it is possible for a malign influence to envelop a place and work a spell on all who come within its radius?"

"Well——" I hesitated. "Well, no—and yes." James looked at me with dislike.

"Are you always as bright as this?" he asked, sourly.

"Of course," I went on, "one has read stories. Henry James's 'Turn of the Screw,' for example. And Dunsany, I think, has one."

"I'm not talking about fiction, fool. Of course there are thousands of haunted houses in fiction."

"Well, in real life. . . . Well, look here, I once, as a matter of fact, did meet a man who knew a fellow——"

"I once lived in a haunted house," he said. If James Rodman has a fault, it is his tendency to be a bad listener. I think it must be the result of always writing those mystery stories of his. You know how the detective in those tales always jumps on his friend and shushes him down if he tries to get a word in edgeways. James has become rather like that. "It cost me five thousand pounds. That is to say, that is the sum I sacrificed by not remaining there. I have spoken to you about my aunt Leila, the one who wrote sentimental novels——"

"*De mortuis*, you know," I said, gravely. "Remember she is dead."

"I know she's dead, fathead. That's the whole point of the story. I wasn't going to say anything against her."

I was relieved. In past years, you see, I had frequently heard James Rodman speak his mind on the subject of his aunt Leila and her books, and I was fearing another outburst. For James, I regret to say, was ashamed of his gifted relative. The lush sentimentalism of Leila May Pinckney, which was so dear to her enormous public, revolted him. He had always held rigid views on the art of the novel, and maintained that the artist should not

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descend to sloppy love-stories but should stick austerely to revolvers, cries in the night, missing papers, mysterious Chinamen, and dead bodies (with or without gash in throat).

I had never myself read anything by the late Miss Pinckney, but I knew that by those entitled to judge she had been regarded as pre-eminent in her particular form of literature. The critics usually headed their reviews of her books with the words :—

ANOTHER PINCKNEY.

Or, sometimes, more offensively :—

ANOTHER PINCKNEY ! ! !

And once, dealing with, I think, "The Love Which Prevails," the literary expert of the *Scrutinizer* had compressed his entire critique into the single phrase "Oh, God ! "

"What I was going to say, when you interrupted me," resumed James, "was that when my aunt Leila died I found she had left me five thousand pounds and the house in the country where she had lived for the last twenty years of her life."

He paused.

"Fancy that ! " I said.

"Twenty years," repeated James. "Grasp that, for it has a vital bearing on what follows. Twenty years, mind you, and she turned out two novels and twelve short stories regularly every year, besides a monthly page of Advice to Young Girls in one of the magazines. That is to say, forty of my aunt Leila's novels and no fewer than two hundred and forty of her short stories were written under the roof of Honeysuckle Cottage."

"A pretty name," I said.

"It was a condition of the will that I should reside there for the whole of the first year and for six months in every year that followed. Failing to do this, I was to forfeit the five thousand pounds."

"It must be great fun making a freak will," I said, meditatively. "I often wish I was rich enough to do it."

"This wasn't a freak will. The condition was perfectly intelligible. Aunt Leila was a firm believer in the influence of environment. She inserted this clause in order to compel me to move from London to the country. She had always objected to my living in London, maintaining that it hardened me and made my outlook on life sordid. She never liked my stuff, poor soul."

"I see."

"So I went down to Honeysuckle Cottage and—— Well, I'll tell you the whole story."

JAMES'S first impressions of Honeysuckle Cottage were, he tells me, wholly favourable. He was delighted with the place. It was a low, rambling, picturesque old house with funny little chimneys and a red roof, placed in the middle of the most charming country. With its oak beams, its trim garden, its trilling birds, and its rose-hung porch, it was the ideal spot for a writer. It was just the sort of place, he reflected whimsically, which his aunt had loved to write about in her books. Even the apple-cheeked old housekeeper who attended to his needs might have stepped straight out of one of them.

It seemed to James that his lot had been cast in pleasant places. He had brought down his books, his pipes, and his golf-clubs, and was hard at work finishing the best thing he had ever done. "The Secret Nine" was the title of it: and on the beautiful summer afternoon on which this story opens he was in the study, hammering away at his typewriter, at peace with the world. The machine was running sweetly, the new tobacco he had bought the day before was proving admirable, and he was moving on all six cylinders to the end of a chapter.

He shoved in a fresh sheet of paper, chewed his pipe thoughtfully for a moment, then wrote rapidly.

For an instant Lester Gage thought that he must have been mistaken. Then the noise came again, faint but unmistakable—a soft scratching on the outer panel.

His mouth set in a grim line. Silently, like a panther, he made one quick step to the desk, noiselessly opened a drawer, drew out his automatic. After that affair of the poisoned needle he was taking no chances. Still in dead silence, he tiptoed to the door ; then, flinging it suddenly open, he stood there, his weapon poised.

On the mat stood the most beautiful girl he had ever beheld. A veritable child of Faery. She eyed him for a moment with a saucy smile ; then with a pretty, roguish look of reproof she shook a dainty forefinger at him.

"I believe you've forgotten me, Mr. Gage ! " she fluted with a mock severity which her eyes belied.

James stared at the paper dumbly. He was utterly perplexed. He had not had the slightest intention of writing anything like this. To begin with, it was his unbroken rule never to permit girls to enter his stories. He held that a detective story should have no heroine. Heroines only held up the action and tried to flirt with the hero when he should have been busy looking for clues, and then went and let the villain kidnap them by

some childishly simple trick. No, no girls for James.

And yet here was this creature with her saucy smile and her dainty forefinger horning in at the most important point in the story. It was uncanny.

He looked once more at his scenario. No, the scenario was all right. In perfectly plain words it stated that what happened when the door opened was that a dying man fell in, and after gasping "The beetle! Tell Scotland Yard that the blue beetle is——" expired on the hearth-rug, leaving Lester Gage not unnaturally somewhat mystified. Nothing whatever about any beautiful girls.

In a curious mood of irritation James scratched out the offending passage, wrote in the necessary corrections, and put the cover on the machine. It was at this point that he heard William whining.

The only blot on this Paradise which James had so far been able to discover was the infernal dog William. Belonging nominally to the gardener, on the very first morning he had adopted James by acclamation. And he maddened and infuriated James. He had a habit of coming and whining under the window when James was at work. The latter would ignore this as long as he could, then, when the thing became insupportable, would bound out of his chair, to see the animal standing on the gravel, gazing expectantly up at him with a stone in his mouth. William had a weak-minded passion for chasing stones, and on the first day James, in a rash spirit of camaraderie, had flung one for him. Since then James had thrown no more stones, but he had thrown any number of other solids, and the garden was littered with objects ranging from match-boxes to a plaster statuette of the young Joseph prophesying before Pharaoh. And still William came and whined, an optimist to the last.

The whining, coming now at a moment when he felt irritable and unsettled, acted on James much as the scratching on the door had acted on Lester Gage. Silently, like a panther, he made one quick step to the mantelpiece, removed from it a china mug bearing the legend "A Present from Clacton-on-Sea," and crept to the window.

And as he did so a voice outside said, "Go away, sir, go away!" and there followed a short, high-pitched bark which was certainly not William's. William was a mixture of Airedale, setter, bull-terrier, and mastiff; and, when in vocal mood, favoured the mastiff side of his family.

James peered out. There on the porch stood a girl in blue. She held in her arms a small fluffy white dog, and she was endeavouring to foil the upward movement

towards this of the blackguard William. William's mentality had been arrested some years before at the point where he imagined that everything in the world had been created for him to eat. A bone, a boot, a steak, the back wheel of a bicycle—it was all one to William. If it was there, he tried to eat it. He had even made a plucky attempt to devour the remains of the young Joseph prophesying before Pharaoh. And it was perfectly plain now that he regarded the curious wriggling object in the girl's arms purely in the light of a snack to keep body and soul together till dinner-time.

"William!" bellowed James.

William looked courteously over his shoulder with eyes that beamed with the pure light of a life's devotion; wagged the whip-like tail which he had inherited from his bull-terrier ancestor, and resumed his intent scrutiny of the fluffy dog.

"Oh, please!" cried the girl. "This great rough dog is frightening poor Toto."

The man of letters and the man of action do not always go hand in hand, but practice had made James perfect in handling with a swift efficiency any situation that involved William. A moment later that canine moron, having received the present from Clacton in the short ribs, was scuttling round the corner of the house, and James had jumped through the window and was facing the girl.

She was an extraordinarily pretty girl. Very sweet and fragile she looked as she

"Oh, please!" cried the girl. "This great rough dog is frightening poor Toto."

stood there under the honeysuckle with the breeze ruffling a tendril of golden hair that strayed from beneath her coquettish little hat. Her eyes were very big and very blue, her rose-tinted face becomingly flushed. All wasted on James, though. He disliked all girls, and particularly the sweet, droopy type.

"Did you want to see somebody?" he asked, stiffly.

"Just the house," said the girl. "If it wouldn't be giving any trouble. I do so want to see the room where Miss Pinckney wrote her books. This is where Leila May Pinckney used to live, isn't it?"

"Yes. I am her nephew. My name is James Rodman."

"Mine is Rose Maynard."

James led the way into the house, and she stopped with a cry of delight on the threshold of the morning-room.

"Oh, how too perfect!" she cried. "So this was her study?"

"Yes."

"What a wonderful place it would be for you to think in, if you were a writer, too!"

James held no high opinion of women's literary taste, but nevertheless he was conscious of an unpleasant shock.

"I *am* a writer," he said, coldly. "I write detective stories."

"I—I'm afraid——" She blushed. "I'm afraid I don't often read detective stories."

"You no doubt prefer," said James, still more coldly, "the sort of thing my aunt used to write."

"Oh, I love her stories!" cried the girl, clasping her hands ecstatically. "Don't you?"

"I cannot say that I do."

"What!"

"They are pure apple-sauce," said James, sternly. "Just nasty blobs of sentimentality, thoroughly untrue to life."

The girl stared.

"Why, that's just what's so wonderful about them, their trueness to life! You feel they might all have happened. I don't understand what you mean."

They were walking down the garden now. James held the gate open for her and she passed through into the road.

"Well, for one thing," he said, "I decline to believe that a marriage between two young people is invariably preceded by some violent and sensational experience in which they both share."

"Are you thinking of 'Scent o' the Blossom,' where Edgar saves Maud from drowning?"

"I am thinking of every single one of my aunt's books." He looked at her curiously. He had just got the solution of a mystery which had been puzzling him for some time. Almost from the moment he had set eyes on her she had seemed somehow strangely familiar. It now suddenly came to him why it was that he disliked her so much. "Do you know," he said, "you might be one of my aunt's heroines yourself. You're just the sort of girl she used to love to write about."

Her face lit up.

"Oh, do you really think so?" She hesitated. "Do you know what I have been feeling ever since I came here? I've been feeling that you are exactly like one of Miss Pinckney's heroes."

"No, I say, really!" said James, revolted.

"Oh, but you are. When you jumped through that window it gave me quite a start. You were so exactly like Claude Masterson in 'Heather o' the Hills.'"

"I have not read 'Heather o' the Hills,'" said James, with a shudder.

"He was very strong and quiet, with deep, dark, sad eyes."

James did not explain that his eyes were sad because her society gave him a pain in the neck. He merely laughed scornfully.

"So now, I suppose," he said, "a car will come and knock you down and I shall carry you gently into the house and lay you—— Look out!" he cried.

It was too late. She was lying in a little huddled heap at his feet. Round the corner a large car had come bowling, keeping with an almost affected precision to the wrong side of the road. It was now receding into the distance, the occupant of the tonneau, a stout, red-faced gentleman in a fur coat, leaning out over the back. He had bared his head—not, one fears, as a pretty gesture of respect and regret, but because he was using his hat to hide the number-plate.

The dog Toto was, unfortunately, uninjured.

James carried the girl gently into the house and laid her on the sofa in the morning-room. He rang the bell and the apple-cheeked housekeeper appeared.

"Send for the doctor," said James. "There has been an accident."

The housekeeper bent over the girl.

"Eh, dearie, dearie!" she said. "Bless her sweet, pretty face!"

The gardener, he who technically owned William, was routed out from among the young lettuces and told to fetch Dr. Brady. He separated his bicycle from William, who was making a light meal off the left pedal, and departed on his mission. Dr. Brady arrived. And in due course he made his report.

"No bones broken, but a number of nasty bruises. And, of course, the shock. She will have to stay here for some time, Rodman. Can't be moved."

"Stay here! But she can't. It isn't proper."

"Your housekeeper will act as a chaperon."

The doctor sighed. He was a man of middle age with side-whiskers.

"A beautiful girl, that, Rodman," he said.

"I suppose so," said James.

"A sweet, beautiful girl. An elfin child."

"A what?" cried James, starting. This imagery was very foreign to Dr. Brady as he knew him. On the only previous occasion on which they had had any extended conversation, the doctor had talked exclusively about the effect of too much proteins on the gastric juices.

"An elfin child. A tender, fairy creature. When I was looking at her just now, Rodman, I nearly broke down. Her little hand lay on the coverlet like some white lily floating on the surface of a still pool, and her dear, trusting eyes gazed up at me——"

He pottered off down the garden, still babbling, and James stood staring after him blankly. And slowly, like some cloud athwart a summer sky, there crept over James's heart the chill shadow of a nameless fear.

IT was about a week later that Mr. Andrew McKinnon, the senior partner in the well-known firm of literary agents, McKinnon and Gooch, sat in his office in Chancery Lane, frowning thoughtfully over a telegram. He rang the bell.

"Ask Mr. Gooch to step in here."

He resumed his study of the telegram.

"Oh, Gooch," he said, when his partner appeared, "I've just had a curious wire from young Rodman. He seems to want to see me very urgently."

Mr. Gooch read the telegram.

"Written under the influence of some strong mental excitement," he agreed. "I wonder why he doesn't come to the office if he wants to see you so badly?"

"He's working very hard, finishing that novel for Prodder and Wiggs. Can't leave it, I suppose. Well, it's a nice day. If you will look after things here, I think I'll motor down and let him give me lunch."

As Mr. McKinnon's car reached the cross-roads a mile from Honeysuckle Cottage, he was aware of a gesticulating figure by the hedge. He stopped the car.

"Morning, Rodman."

"Thank God you've come!" said James. It seemed to Mr. McKinnon that the young man looked paler and thinner. "Would you mind walking the rest of the way? There's something I want to speak to you about."

Mr. McKinnon alighted, and James, as he glanced at him, felt cheered and encouraged by the very sight of the man. The literary agent was a grim, hard-bitten person, to whom, when he called at their offices to arrange terms, editors kept their faces turned so that they might at least retain their back collar-studs. There was no sentiment in Andrew McKinnon. Editresses of Society papers practised their blandishments on him in vain, and many a publisher had woken screaming in the night, dreaming that he was signing a McKinnon contract.

"WELL, Rodman," he said, "Prodder and Wiggs have agreed to our terms. I was writing to tell you so when your wire arrived. I had a lot of trouble with them, but it's fixed at twenty per cent. rising to twenty-five, and two hundred pounds advance royalties on day of publication."

"Good," said James, absently. "Good. McKinnon, do you remember my aunt, Leila May Pinckney?"

"Remember her? Why, I was her agent all her life."

"Of course. Then you know the sort of tripe she wrote."

"No author," said Mr. McKinnon, reprovingly, "who pulls down a steady twenty thousand pounds a year writes tripe."

"Well, anyway, you know her stuff."

"Who better?"

"When she died she left me five thousand pounds and her house, Honeysuckle Cottage. I'm living there now. McKinnon, do you believe in haunted houses?"

"No."

"Yet I tell you solemnly that Honeysuckle Cottage is haunted!"

"By your aunt?" said Mr. McKinnon, surprised.

"By her influence. There's a malignant spell over the place. A sort of miasma of sentimentalism. Everybody who enters it succumbs."

"Tut, tut! You mustn't have these fancies."

"They aren't fancies."

"You aren't seriously meaning to tell me——"

"Well, how do you account for this? That book you were speaking about, which Prodder and Wiggs are to publish, 'The Secret Nine.' Every time I sit down to write it, a girl keeps trying to sneak in."

"Into the room?"

"Into the story."

"You don't want a love-interest in your sort of book," said Mr. McKinnon, shaking his head. "It delays the action."

"I know it does. And every day I have to keep shooing this infernal female out. An awful girl, McKinnon. A soppy, soupy, treacly, drooping girl with a roguish smile. This morning she tried to butt in on the scene where Lester Gage is trapped in the den of the mysterious leper."

"No!"

"She did, I assure you. I had to rewrite three pages before I could get her out of it. And that's not the worst. Do you know, McKinnon, that at this moment I am actually living the plot of a typical Leila May Pinckney novel in just the setting she always used? And, my God! I can see the happy ending coming nearer every day. A week ago a girl was knocked down by a car at my door, and I've had to put her up. And every day I realize more

"She will have to stay here for some time," said the doctor. "Can't be moved." "Stay here! But she can't. It isn't proper."

clearly that, sooner or later, I shall ask her to marry me."

"Don't do it," said Mr. McKinnon, a stout bachelor. "You're too young to marry."

"So was Methuselah," said James, a stouter. "But all the same, I know I'm going to do it. It's the influence of this awful house weighing upon me. I feel like an egg-shell in a maelstrom. I am being sucked on by a force too strong for me to resist. This morning I found myself kissing her dog!"

"No!"

"I did. And I loathe the little beast. Yesterday I got up at dawn and plucked a nosegay of flowers for her, wet with the dew."

"Rodman!"

"It's a fact. I laid them at her door and went downstairs kicking myself all the way. And there in the hall was the apple-cheeked housekeeper regarding me archly. If she didn't murmur 'Bless their sweet young hearts!' my ears deceived me."

"Why don't you pack up and leave?"

"If I do, I lose the five thousand pounds."

"Ah!" said Mr. McKinnon.

"I can understand what has happened. It's the same with all haunted houses. My aunt's subliminal ether-vibrations have woven themselves into the texture of the place, creating an atmosphere which forces the ego of all who come in contact with it to attune themselves to it. It's either that or something to do with the fourth dimension."

Mr. McKinnon laughed scornfully.

"Tut, tut!" he said, testily. "This is pure imagination. What has happened is that you've been working too hard. You'll see this precious atmosphere of yours will have no effect on me."

"That's exactly why I asked you to come down. I hoped you might break the spell."

"I will that," said Mr. McKinnon, jovially.

The fact that the literary agent spoke little at lunch caused James no apprehension. Mr. McKinnon was ever a silent trencherman. From time to time James caught him stealing a glance at the girl, who was well enough to come down to meals now, limping pathetically; but he could read nothing in his face. And yet the mere look of his face was a consolation. It was so solid, so matter-of-fact, so exactly like an unemotional coco nut.

"You've done me good," said James, with a sigh of relief, as he escorted the agent down the garden to his car after lunch. "I felt all along that I could rely on your rugged common sense. The whole atmosphere of the place seems different now."

Mr. McKinnon did not speak for a moment. He seemed to be plunged in thought.

"Rodman," he said, as he got into his car, "I've been thinking over that suggestion of yours of putting a love-interest into 'The Secret Nine.' I think you're wise. The story needs it. After all, what is there greater in the world than love? Love—love—aye, it's the sweetest word in the language. Put in a heroine and let her marry Lester Gage."

"If," said James, grimly, "she does succeed in worming her way in, she'll jolly well marry the mysterious leper. But, look here, I don't understand——"

"It was seeing that girl that changed me," proceeded Mr. McKinnon. And as James stared at him aghast, tears suddenly filled his hard-boiled eyes. He openly snuffled. "Aye, seeing her sitting there under the roses with all that smell of honeysuckle and all. And the birdies singing so sweet in the garden and the sun lighting up her bonnie face. The puir wee lass!" he muttered, dabbing at his eyes. "The puir bonnie wee lass! Rodman," he said, his voice quivering, "I've decided that we're being hard on Prodder and Wiggs. Wiggs has had sickness in his home lately. We mustn't be hard on a man who's had sickness in his home, hey, laddie? No, no! I'm going to take back that contract and alter it to a flat twelve per cent. and no advance royalties."

"What!"

"But you sha'n't lose by it, Rodman. No, no, you sha'n't lose by it, my mannie. I am going to waive my commission. The puir bonnie wee lass!"

The car rolled off down the road. Mr. McKinnon, seated in the back, was blowing his nose violently.

"This is the end!" said James.

I WANT you to appreciate James's position. You who read this are probably a happy married man, constitutionally unable to realize the intensity of the instinct for self-preservation which animates Nature's bachelors in time of peril. James, you feel, was making a lot of fuss about nothing. Charming girl—pretty as a picture—big blue eyes—— A lucky dog, you consider.

But James was so constructed as to be unable to look at the matter in this way. He had a congenital horror of matrimony. Though a young man, he had allowed himself to develop a great many habits which were as the breath of life to him; and these habits, he knew instinctively, a wife would shoot to pieces within a week of the end of the honeymoon.

James liked to breakfast in bed: and, having breakfasted, to smoke in bed and

knock the ashes out on the carpet. What wife would tolerate this practice?

James liked to pass his days in a tennis shirt, grey flannel trousers, and slippers. What wife ever rests until she has enclosed her husband in a stiff collar, tight boots, and a morning suit and taken him with her to *thés musicales?*

These and a thousand other thoughts of the same kind flashed through the unfortunate young man's mind as the days went by. And every day that passed seemed to draw him nearer to the brink of the chasm. Fate appeared to be taking a malicious pleasure in making things as difficult for him as possible. Now that the girl was well enough to leave her bed, she spent her time sitting in a chair on the sun-sprinkled porch, and James had to read to her. And poetry at that. And not the jolly, wholesome sort of poetry the boys are turning out nowadays, either—good, honest stuff about sin and gas-works and decaying corpses, but the old-fashioned kind with rhymes in it, dealing almost exclusively with love.

The weather, moreover, continued superb. The honeysuckle cast its sweet scent on the gentle breeze; the roses over the porch stirred and nodded; the flowers in the garden were lovelier than ever; the birds sang their little throats sore. And every evening there was a magnificent sunset. It was almost as if Nature were doing it on purpose.

At last James intercepted Dr. Brady as he was leaving after one of his visits and put the thing to him squarely.

"When is that girl going?"

The doctor patted him on the arm.

"Not yet, Rodman," he said, in a low, understanding voice. "No need to worry yourself about that. Mustn't be moved for days and days—I might almost say weeks and weeks and weeks."

"Weeks and weeks!" cried James.

"And weeks," said Dr. Brady. He prodded James roguishly in the abdomen. "Good luck to you, my boy; good luck to you," he said.

It was some small consolation to James that the mushy physician immediately afterwards tripped over William on his way down the path and broke his stethoscope. When a man is up against it like James, every little helps.

He was walking dismally back to the house after this conversation when he was met by the apple-cheeked housekeeper.

"The little lady would like to speak to you, sir," said the apple-cheeked exhibit, rubbing her hands.

"Would she?" said James, hollowly.

"So sweet and pretty she looks, sir; oh, sir, you wouldn't believe! Like a blessed angel sitting there with her dear eyes all a-shining——"

"Don't do it!" cried James, with extraordinary vehemence. "Don't do it!"

He found the girl propped up on the cushions and thought once again how singularly he disliked her. And yet, even as he thought this, some force against which he had to fight madly was whispering to him: "Go to her and take that little hand! Breathe into that little ear the burning words that will make that little face turn away, crimsoned with blushes!" He wiped a bead of perspiration from his forehead and sat down.

"Mrs. Stick-in-the-Mud — what's her name?—says you want to see me."

The girl nodded.

"I've had a letter from Uncle Henry. I wrote to him as soon as I was better and told him what had happened, and he is coming here to-morrow morning."

"Uncle Henry?"

"That's what I call him, but he's really no relation. He is my guardian. He and daddy were officers in the same regiment, and when daddy was killed, fighting on the Afghan frontier, he died in Uncle Henry's arms and with his last breath begged him to take care of me."

James started. A sudden wild hope had awoken in his heart. Years ago, he remembered, he had read a book of his aunt's, entitled "Rupert's Legacy," and in that book——

"It was seeing that girl that changed me," said Mr. McKinnon. And as James stared at him aghast, tears suddenly filled his hard-boiled eyes.

"I'm engaged to marry him," said the girl, quietly.

"Wow!" shouted James.

"What?" asked the girl, startled.

"Touch of cramp," said James. He was thrilling all over. That wild hope had been realized.

"It was daddy's dying wish that we should marry," said the girl.

"And dashed sensible of him, too. Dashed sensible," said James, warmly.

"And yet," she went on, a little wistfully, "I sometimes wonder——"

"Don't," said James. "Don't. You must respect a father's dying wish. So he's coming here to-morrow, is he? Capital, capital! To lunch, I suppose? Excellent! I'll run down and tell Mrs. Who-is-it to lay in another chop."

IT was with a gay and uplifted heart that James strolled the garden and smoked his pipe next morning. A great cloud seemed to have rolled itself away from him. Everything was for the best in the best of all possible worlds. He had finished "The Secret Nine" and shipped it off to Mr. McKinnon, and now as he strolled there was shaping itself in his mind a corking plot about a man with only half a face who lived in a secret den under a house near Kennington Oval and terrorized London with a series of shocking murders. And what made them so shocking was the fact that each of the victims, when discovered, was found to have only half a face, too. The rest had been chipped off, presumably by some blunt instrument.

The thing was coming out magnificently, when suddenly his attention was diverted by a piercing scream. Out of the bushes fringing the river that ran beside the garden burst the apple-cheeked housekeeper.

"Oh, sir! Oh, sir! Oh, sir!"

"What is it?" demanded James, irritably.

"Oh, sir! Oh, sir! Oh, sir!"

"Yes, and then what?"

"The little dog, sir. He's in the river."

"Well, whistle him to come out."

"Oh, sir, do come quick. He'll be drowned."

James followed her through the bushes, taking off his coat as he went. He was saying to himself: "I will not rescue this dog. I do not like the dog, it is high time he had a bath, and in any case it would be much simpler to stand on the bank and fish for him with a rake. Only an ass out of a Leila May Pinckney book would dive into a beastly river to save——"

At this point he dived. Toto, alarmed by the splash, swam rapidly for the bank, but James was too quick for him. Grasping him firmly by the neck, he scrambled ashore and ran for the house, followed by the housekeeper.

The girl was seated on the porch. Over her there bent the tall, soldierly figure of a man with keen eyes and greying hair. The housekeeper raced up.

"Oh, miss! Toto! In the river! He saved him, miss! He plunged in and saved him!"

The girl drew a quick breath.

"Gallant, damme! By Jove! By gad! Yes, gallant, by George!" exclaimed the soldierly man.

The girl seemed to wake from a reverie.

"Uncle Henry, this is Mr. Rodman. Mr. Rodman, my guardian, Colonel Carteret."

"Proud to meet you, sir," said the Colonel, his honest blue eyes glowing as he fingered his short, crisp moustache. "As fine a thing as I ever heard of, damme!"

"Yes. You are brave—brave," the girl whispered.

"I am wet—wet," said James, and went upstairs to change his clothes.

THE girl did not appear at lunch, and James had to undertake the task of entertaining Colonel Carteret by himself. It was not a particularly easy task, for the man appeared silent and preoccupied. James, anxious to play the host, tried to draw him out on golf, Cubist art, the Czecho-Slovakian problem, life in the East, the dance craze, the growing unrest of the age, the treatment of hens in sickness, modern music, hydrotherapy as a cure for rheumatism, and the weather, but was countered by silent nods. From time to time the Colonel, pulling at his crisp moustache, seemed about to say something, but never got farther than a brief military clearing of the throat. Once James, catching his eye as he reached for the mustard, found that the elder man was scrutinizing him closely.

The meal concluded, he produced cigarettes, and for a while the silence remained unbroken. Then Colonel Carteret bent forward, his clean-cut face grave.

"Rodman," he said, "I should like to speak to you."

"Yes?" said James, thinking it was about time.

"Rodman," said Colonel Carteret. "Or, rather, George. I may call you George?" he added, with a sort of wistful diffidence that had a singular charm.

"Certainly, if you wish it," replied James, civilly. "Though my name is James."

"James, eh? Well, well, it amounts to the same thing, eh, what, damme, by gad?" said the Colonel with a momentary return of

"Oh, miss!" said the housekeeper. "Toto! In the river! He saved him, miss! He plunged in and saved him!"

his bluff, soldierly manner. "Well, then, James, I have something that I wish to say to you. Did Miss Maynard—did Rose happen to tell you anything about myself in—er—in connection with herself?"

"She mentioned that you and she were engaged to be married."

The Colonel's tightly-drawn lips quivered. "No longer," he said.

"What!"

"No, John, my boy——"

"James."

"No, James, my boy, no longer. While you were upstairs changing your clothes, she told me—breaking down, poor child, as she spoke—that she wished our engagement to be at an end."

James half rose from the table, his cheeks blanched.

"You don't mean that!" he gasped.

Colonel Carteret nodded. He was staring out of the window, his fine eyes set in a look of pain.

"But this is nonsense," cried James. "This is absurd. She—she mustn't be allowed to chop and change like this. I mean to say, it—it isn't fair——"

"Don't think of me, my boy."

"I'm not—I mean, did she give any reason?"

"Her eyes did."

"Her what did?"

"Her eyes, when she looked at you on the porch, as you stood there—young, heroic—having just saved the life of the dog she loves. It is you who have won that tender heart, my boy."

"Now listen," protested James. "You aren't going to sit there and tell me that a girl falls in love with a man just because he saves her dog from drowning?"

"Why, surely," said Colonel Carteret, surprised. "What better reason could she have?" He sighed. "It is the old, old story, my boy. Youth to Youth. I am an old man—I should have known—I should have foreseen—yes, Youth to Youth."

"You aren't a bit old."

"Yes, yes."

"No, no."

"Yes, yes."

"Don't keep on saying 'Yes, yes,'" cried James, clutching at his hair. "Besides, she wants a steady old buffer—a steady, sensible man of medium age—to look after her."

Colonel Carteret shook his head with a gentle smile.

"This is mere quixotry, my boy. It is splendid of you to take this attitude, but no, no."

"Yes, yes."

"No, no." He gripped James's hand for an instant, then rose and walked to the door. "That is all I wished to say, Tom."

"James."

"James. I just thought that you ought to know how matters stood. Go to her, my boy, go to her, and don't let any thought of an old man's broken dream keep you from pouring out what is in your heart. I am an old soldier, lad, an old soldier. I have learned to take the rough with the smooth. But I think—I think I will leave you now. I—I should—should like to be alone for awhile. If you need me, you will find me in the raspberry bushes."

He paused at the door; smiled that brave, gentle smile of his once again, and was gone. A soldier and a gentleman. It is not only on the stricken field of battle that the officers of the King's Own Royal Punjabi Light Cavalry are trained to bear themselves like men.

HE had scarcely gone when James, also, left the room. He took his hat and stick and walked blindly out of the garden, he knew not whither. His brain was numbed. Then, as his powers of reasoning returned, he told himself that he should have foreseen this ghastly thing. If there was one type of character over which Leila May Pinckney had been wont to spread herself, it was the pathetic guardian who loves his ward but renounces her to the younger man. No wonder the girl had broken off the engagement. Any elderly guardian who allowed himself to come within a mile of Honeysuckle Cottage was simply asking for it.

And then, as he turned to walk back, a sort of dull defiance gripped James. Why, he asked, should he allow himself to be put upon in this manner? If the girl liked to throw over this man, why should he be the goat?

He saw his way clearly now. He just wouldn't do it, that was all. And if they didn't like it they could lump it.

Full of a new fortitude, he strode in at the gate. A tall, soldierly figure emerged from the raspberry bushes and came to meet him.

"Well?" said Colonel Carteret.

"Well?" said James, defiantly.

"Am I to congratulate you?"

James caught his keen blue eye and hesitated. It was not going to be so simple as he had supposed.

"Well—er——" he said.

Into the keen blue eyes there came a look that James had not seen there before. It was the stern, hard look which (probably) had caused men to bestow upon this old soldier the name of Cold-Steel Carteret.

"You have not asked Rose to marry you?"

"Er—no. Not yet."

The keen blue eyes grew keener and bluer.

"Rodman," said Colonel Carteret, in a strange, quiet voice, "I have known that little girl since she was a tiny child. For years she has been all in all to me. Her father died in my arms, and with his last breath bade me see that no harm came to his darling. I have nursed her through mumps, measles—aye, and chicken-pox, and I live but for her happiness." He paused, with a significance that made James's toes curl. "Rodman," he said, "do you know what I would do to any man who trifled with that little girl's affections?" He reached in his hip-pocket, and an ugly-looking revolver glittered in the sunlight. "I would shoot him like a dog."

"Like a dog?" faltered James.

"Like a dog," said Colonel Carteret. He took James's arm and turned him towards the house. "She is on the porch. Go to her. And if——" He broke off. "But, tut," he said, in a kindlier tone, "I am doing you an injustice, my boy. I know it."

"Oh, you are," said James, fervently.

"Your heart is in the right place."

"Oh, absolutely," said James.

"Then go to her, my boy. Later on you may have something to tell me. If so, you will find me in the strawberry beds."

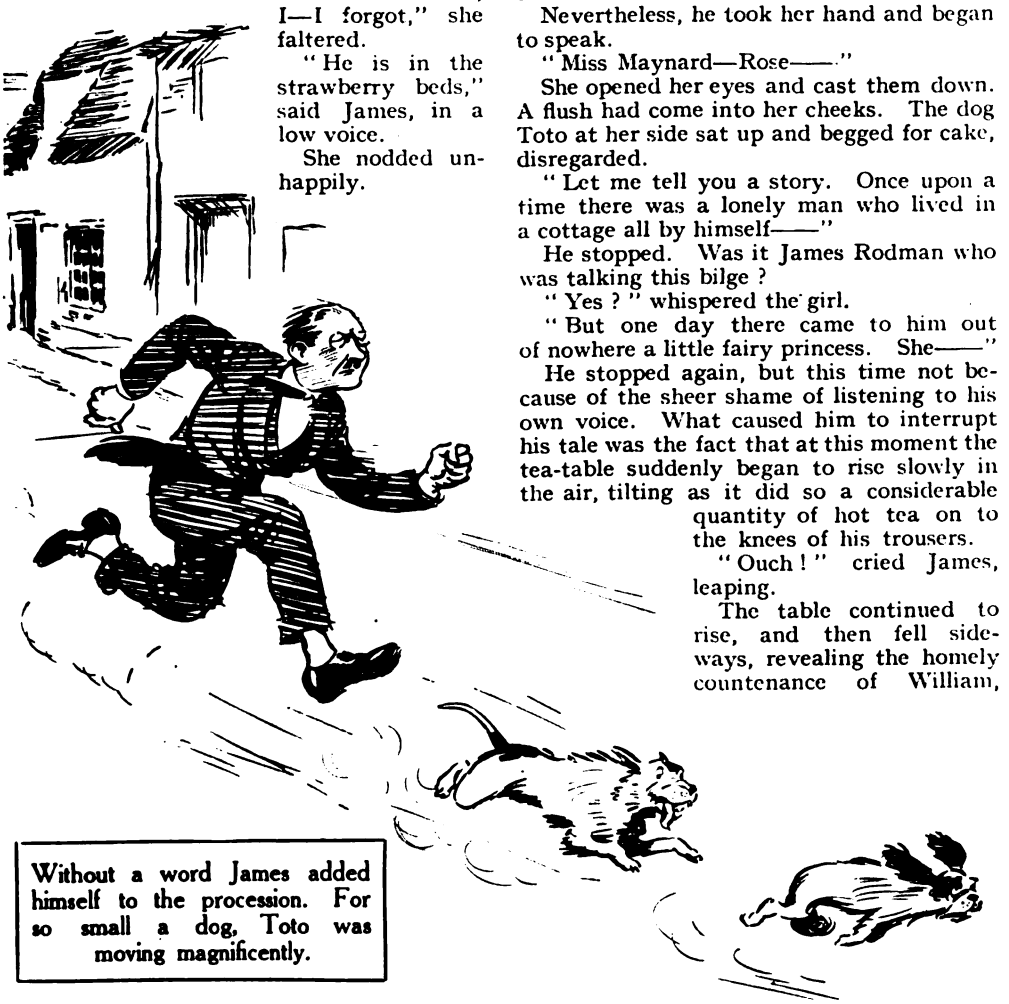
IT was very cool and fragrant on the porch. Overhead, little breezes played and laughed among the roses. Somewhere in the distance sheep-bells tinkled, and in the shrubbery a thrush was singing its

evensong. Seated in her chair behind a wicker table laden with tea-things, Rose Maynard watched James as he shambled up the path.

"Tea's ready," she called, gaily. "Where is Uncle Henry?" A look of pity and distress flitted for a moment over her flower-like face. "Oh, I—I forgot," she faltered.

"He is in the strawberry beds," said James, in a low voice.

She nodded unhappily.



Without a word James added himself to the procession. For so small a dog, Toto was moving magnificently.

"Of course, of course. Oh, why is life like this?" James heard her whisper.

He sat down. He looked at the girl. She was leaning back with closed eyes, and he had thought he had never seen such a little squirt in his life. The idea of passing his remaining days in her society revolted him. He was stoutly opposed to the idea of marrying anyone; but if, as happens to the best of us, he ever was compelled to perform the wedding-glide, he had always hoped it would be with some lady golf champion who would help him with his putting, and thus, by bringing his handicap down a notch or two, enable him to save something from the wreck, so to speak. But to link his lot with a girl who read his aunt's books and liked them; a girl who could tolerate the presence of the dog Toto; a girl who clasped her hands in pretty, childish joy when she saw a nasturtium in bloom—it was too much.

Nevertheless, he took her hand and began to speak.

"Miss Maynard—Rose——"

She opened her eyes and cast them down. A flush had come into her cheeks. The dog Toto at her side sat up and begged for cake, disregarded.

"Let me tell you a story. Once upon a time there was a lonely man who lived in a cottage all by himself——"

He stopped. Was it James Rodman who was talking this bilge?

"Yes?" whispered the girl.

"But one day there came to him out of nowhere a little fairy princess. She——"

He stopped again, but this time not because of the sheer shame of listening to his own voice. What caused him to interrupt his tale was the fact that at this moment the tea-table suddenly began to rise slowly in the air, tilting as it did so a considerable quantity of hot tea on to the knees of his trousers.

"Ouch!" cried James, leaping.

The table continued to rise, and then fell sideways, revealing the homely countenance of William, who, concealed by the cloth, had been taking a nap beneath it. He moved slowly forward, his eyes on Toto. For many a long day William had been desirous of putting to the test, once and for all, the problem of whether Toto was edible or not. Sometimes he thought yes; at other times no. Now seemed an admirable opportunity for a definite decision. He advanced on the object of his experiment, making a low whistling noise through his nostrils, not unlike a boiling kettle. And Toto, after one long look of incredulous horror, tucked

his shapely tail between his legs and, turning, raced for safety. He had laid a course in a bee-line for the open garden gate, and William, shaking a dish of marmalade off his head a little petulantly, galloped ponderously after him.

Rose Maynard staggered to her feet.

"Oh, save him!" she cried.

Without a word James added himself to the procession. His interest in Toto was but tepid. What he wanted was to get near enough to William to discuss with him that matter of the tea on his trousers. He reached the road, and found that the order of the runners had not changed. For so small a dog, Toto was moving magnificently. A cloud of dust rose as he skidded round the corner. William followed. James followed William.

And so they passed Farmer Birkett's barn, Farmer Giles's cow-shed, the place where Farmer Willetts's pigsty used to be before the big fire, and the Bunch of Grapes public-house, Jno. Biggs, propr., licensed to sell tobacco, wines, and spirits. And it was as they were turning down the lane that leads past Farmer Robinson's chicken-run that Toto, thinking swiftly, bolted abruptly into a small drain-pipe.

"William!" roared James, coming up at a canter. He stopped to pluck a branch from the hedge and swooped darkly on.

William had been crouching before the pipe, making a noise like a bassoon into its interior; but now he rose and came beamingly to James. His eyes were aglow with chumminess and affection; and, placing his forefeet on James's chest, he licked him three times on the face in rapid succession.

And, as he did so, something seemed to snap in James. The scales seemed to fall from James's eyes. For the first time he saw William as he really was, the authentic type of dog who saves his master from a frightful peril. A wave of emotion swept over him.

"William!" he muttered. "William!"

William was making an early supper off a half-brick he had found in the road. James stooped and patted him fondly.

"William," he whispered, "you knew when the time had come to change the conversation, didn't you, old boy?" He straightened himself. "Come, William," he said. "Another four miles and we reach East Wobsley Junction. Make it snappy and we shall just catch the up express, first stop London."

William looked up into his face, and it seemed to James that he gave a brief nod of comprehension and approval. James turned. Through the trees to the east he could see the red roof of Honeysuckle Cottage, lurking like some evil dragon in ambush.

Then, together, man and dog passed silently into the sunset.

THAT is the story James Rodman told to me as the rain beat and rattled against the window-pane. As to whether it is true, that, of course, is an open question. I, personally, am of opinion that it is. There is no doubt that James did go to live at Honeysuckle Cottage three or four years ago, and, while there, underwent some experience which has left an ineradicable mark upon him. His eyes to-day have that unmistakable look which comes only to confirmed bachelors whose feet have been led to the very brink of the pit and who have gazed at close range into the naked face of matrimony.

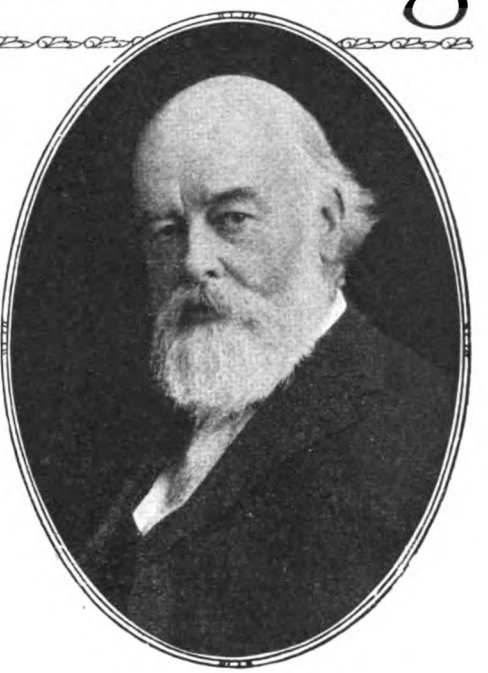
And, if further proof is needed, there is William. He is now James's inseparable companion. Would any man be habitually seen in public with a dog like William unless he had some solid cause to be grateful to him? I think not. Myself, when I observe William coming along the street, I cross the road and look into a shop-window till he has passed. I am not a snob, but I dare not risk my social prestige by being seen talking to him.

Nor is the precaution an unnecessary one. There is a shameless absence of all appreciation of class distinctions about William which recalls the worst excesses of the French Revolution. I have seen him with my own eyes chivvy a Pomeranian belonging to a duchess from near the Achilles statue to within a few yards of Queen's Gate.

And yet James walks daily with him in Piccadilly. It is surely significant.

When I Was Young

A SERIES of ARTICLES by CELEBRITIES of TO-DAY describing HOW THEY VIEWED LIFE IN THEIR EARLY YEARS



No 3

SIR OLIVER LODGE

I WAS born before the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny; and they are among my earliest recollections. But they were events happening at a great distance; and though I remember some horrors about the Mutiny, and though I would like my remembrance of the Crimean War to be associated with Florence Nightingale and the other kind of horrors against which she so manfully contended, my chief actual recollections are a song called "The Red White and Blue," with a line in it about "thrashing the Russian bear now or never," and that the toys of that date were leaden editions of cavalry and infantry, shot at and overthrown by peas propelled from small spring cannon. Also, a little later, the inauguration of a Russian gun in an open space under a central lamp-post at Stoke-upon-Trent, at which my father assisted, and lost me in the crowd, ultimately returning home by the hill to Penkhull without me, to everybody's dismay, and then returning, to find me "standing on the burning deck," so to speak, after the crowd had dispersed; waiting, I suppose, for the gun to go off. I cannot remember, however, that wars and rumours of wars aroused any ambition or any clear ideas in my mind; and the toys I chiefly fancied were not the soldiers, but the bricks, that is to say, innumerable pieces of wood, with which one could build up more or less ingenious structures, eked out with engineering contrivances. In this kind of play my son Raymond proved himself, some forty years later, very proficient. He went farther than I did, and had real brown-paper fires, and smoke travelling along the flues of his buildings. He also had sanitary arrangements with real water; which turned out useful when the bricks got too much charred.

But I must turn my mind to educational and mental development. Like my brother Richard, I learned to read at a very early age; and I never remember any trouble about learning. The first book I read absorbingly to myself for enjoyment was Captain Mayne Reid's "Plant Hunters," in which, sandwiched among the others, were instructive chapters dealing with botany; these I skipped; but some of the adventures of the three men among the crevasses and caves and glaciers of the Himalayas I remember to this day. In fact, my memory was extraordinarily good. So that a little later on it used to be noticed that when I had read

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a page of any book I could almost say it. And I now perceive that, compared with most people, I had very little difficulty in learning by heart. Unfortunately, however, I was given very little of value to learn, and was not introduccd to any poetry until my teens, except, of course, hymns and other childishnesses.

My first real education was with my grandmother, at Bromley, in Kent, a striking old lady to whom I am deeply grateful; for she taught me, and my brother also, to read aloud with due emphasis and precision. "Sandford and Merton" was one of the pieces of resistance of those days.

When two years old.

Later, at Penkhull, I went to a dame school, half-way down the steep hill towards Stoke. Here there were many girls and a few small boys, crowded into what must have been a very unhealthy atmosphere in a small room; and doing nothing that I remember except mechanical tasks, such as writing out every alternate afternoon the Kings of England with their dates, and on the other afternoons the numbers from one to twenty or a hundred in Arabic and Roman symbols and in English words. While in the evening we learned, for next day, meaningless passages ticked off in a geography book, and to spell a list of words of five syllables; the latter being so absurdly easy that I had to learn, not only the spelling, but the sequence of the words—an utterly meaningless form of mechanical repetition, which was so hard as to be almost impossible. The school hours were very long, three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon, with night work in addition. And the amount of real knowledge acquired was exceedingly small. We certainly did arithmetic, of a kind; and I was able to get as far as long division. But I cannot say that the process was explained, nor do I imagine that it was really understood by the so-called "teachers." Arithmetic was a mechanical grind of exceeding dullness, instead of being the lively and amusing subject that it might be. The chief thing, I suppose, that I acquired was a habit of drilled discipline, and sticking to unpleasant tasks because they had to be got through. This, I believe, has stood me in good stead. The modern system of offering choice, and encouraging children to do what they like or take an interest in, was never thought of in those days. One did not learn much, but one acquired the habit of labour.

At the age of eight I was sent as a private pupil to the second master of the Grammar School in Newport, Shropshire, to begin the ordinary grind of an old-fashioned grammar school. Very old-fashioned it was. It has been totally remodelled since; but in those days the traditions of a century or more had continued unchanged. The school was one large room, with the bigger boys at one end with the head master, the middle boys at the other end under the second master, and the small boys in the middle under the third or writing master. Each master taught all the subjects to his particular set of boys. And it was under the writing master that I began Latin. My experience was very like that of Mr. Winston Churchill, except that the noun was "musa" instead of "mensa." I was given an Eton Latin Grammar, all in Latin, without a word of explanation, and told to learn the first page. I didn't even know that I hadn't to

In early boyhood.

learn the small print. I had no notion of what anything meant, but laboriously spent some hours on it before I found that what I was expected to learn was comparatively simple. I don't suppose I understood the full meaning of the accidence for years. And I doubt whether the master could have explained intelligently, even if it had struck him to try; I was able to learn by rote, and that sufficed.

Age 13.

But when in due time I moved up to the second master and began the syntax, still all in Latin, and Ellis's abominable, though perhaps excellent, exercises—in the composition of Latin sentences—it was a more serious matter. The grammar was appallingly difficult, being practically meaningless; and mistakes were visited with great severity. In Latin composition every false concord was visited with the cane. Yet with the best intentions it was not always possible to avoid them. However, in this sort of uncompromising way I waded through four Books of Cæsar, and a portion of the Æneid.

At eleven I began Greek, which was rather a joyful change; for by this time I had got to know the hang of the grammar by instinct. And the similarity in the midst of diversity was rather pleasing. I got through a lot of Valpy's Greek Delectus, in spite of all the explanations being in Latin, and did a fair amount of Xenophon.

At twelve the second master obtained a Rectory in Suffolk, and thither I, and two other boys who had been private pupils, migrated: going on with the Greek and Latin, and learning practically nothing else, but learning them pretty thoroughly in the old-fashioned way; our text being the "Oxford Pocket Classics" without any Notes.

For not only was a crib strenuously forbidden, but even notes, which might have made the text more interesting. The only aids were grammar and dictionary. But we certainly had to do the thing very thoroughly, so far as the mere language was concerned. No attempt was made to deal with it on the historical or literary sides. Nor had I yet any conception of what poetry meant, though we were doing Homer and Horace. Again I rather doubt if the master knew. That which he himself had been taught he passed on to us, in the same severe mechanical manner, with great emphasis on grammar, but (as I see now) with no real hint of scholarship.

We ploughed through some portions of Virgil, Horace, Xenophon, and Homer; just beginning Euripides' "Medea" when, at the age of fourteen, I had to leave. For my father, by a fall from his horse, had broken his right arm, and was otherwise apparently in failing health, and wanted me to help in his business, to which, in the old days, it was thought that a boy *ought* to be introduced at fourteen as a junior clerk, or he would never get on. There was a strong prejudice against too much education for people in business, and no idea of sending them to the University first.

Looking back, it feels as if we did nothing but Classics; but we certainly did some grammatical French, and some mechanical Arithmetic and Algebra and Euclid. Any Algebra beyond quadratic equations was beyond the tether of the teacher; and indeed haziness even at this stage began to be apparent even to my limited capacity. Still, I liked Algebra much better than Arithmetic, for the reasonableness of it could be intuitively perceived; whereas Arithmetic remained dull and confused. The Euclid, however, I delighted in. People say it ought not to be learnt by heart: I don't see how it can be learnt properly any other way. Of course, it must be understood; but it is so full of sense that the learning of it is quite easy; and unless the order of the propositions is known, its logical character disappears. Each proposition depends for the most part on the preceding one; and, taken out of the right order, they are a jumble. I know that the fifth proposition of the First Book is rather nonsense, now; but it did not strike me so then, and I never felt any difficulty about it. Indeed, the whole of Euclid was a delight, except the Fifth Book, which we didn't attempt. There was a time when I could say the first Four Books straight off in their right order without prompting. But that was later, when I was preparing for the

London Matriculation, working by myself; taking up the classical grind at the point where I had dropped it at school, and spreading into the other subjects required as best I could without a teacher.

The subject that gave me the most trouble in the Matriculation examination was "English Language." I had never learnt English in the scholastic manner, and did not know what books would take the special line required by the examiners; so that I had to cover a lot of ground before I found out. There were no options in those days; and the subjects were treated in a way suitable for Sixth Form boys. I have always rather delighted in examinations, and on the whole have done well in them, but Matriculation was the hardest I ever tackled; just as the D.Sc., which in my day was solely an examination, was about the easiest. The B.Sc. was not easy, because there was such an immense range of subjects; and I worked at the first B.Sc. without a teacher; managing nevertheless to get First Class Honours in Physics, a subject which always came easy to me, and which I had continually to refrain from, as a sort of temptation, in order to concentrate on the other more difficult and less palatable subjects.

But I want to hark back now to an earlier stage of youth. First when, at the age of twelve, I spent a summer holiday visiting an aunt, in Weston-super-Mare, who gave me the "Orbs of Heaven" to read, and who had a celestial globe, from which, with but little assistance, I could pick out the constellations. I threw myself with enthusiasm into what she called Astronomy; and I certainly learnt the autumn and winter constellations in the most thorough manner. I have never forgotten them; and even when a single star shows through a rift in the clouds, I can at that time of year make a very good shot at its identity.

Age 18.

Later, I saved up and acquired a satisfactory three-inch telescope, at a low price, from a man called Slater in the Euston Road, and, with the help of Webb's "Celestial Objects," enthusiastically pursued double stars, nebulæ, and anything that could be seen with an instrument of that calibre, to which I adapted a sort of rough equatorial stand.

Going still farther back, to the age of six or thereabouts, I was fascinated by locomotives, and was lent some books, by that same aunt, which gave some idea of their construction. Self-moving machines have always fascinated me; and I could watch the piston and slide valve arrangements of a stationary engine for hours, during my youth. I wanted to be an engineer, but it seemed out of the question.

These were my only early inklings of science, except the introductory chapters of a geography book, which dealt with the figure of the earth and other elementary facts—the only part of the book that I was interested in—all of which I gradually absorbed and supplemented, both by thought and by other reading, when I could pick it up.

The other incident I want to recall is when in Suffolk, at the age of thirteen, a sister of the rector (a lady of some cultivation) came on a visit during the master's absence, and was horrified to find that, though we had read Homer and Virgil and Horace, we knew nothing of poetry. To my gratitude, she read us of an evening "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" and "The Lady of the Lake," thus opening a new and unexpected source of interest, which has broadened and never run dry. I now at last began to perceive, for instance, what the apostrophe to the Muse or the Goddess in classical writers meant. Previously it had been a meaningless form of words, to be dug out of the dictionary. The words had not only seemed meaningless, but absurd. Why should anyone begin a laborious book with the idea of singing? I took "Cano" to have some reference to a dog. I perceive, now, that while my instinct for literature was dormant, my instinct for science was alive and active, but unfed. Good teaching could have evoked both.

I sometimes wonder whether the literary instinct of a man like F. W. H. Myers, to whom Virgil appealed strongly even in infancy, was awakened by good teaching, or by a sort of inspiration. I had that kind of inspiration for science, as I now perceive. So I suppose some people have it for literature. But literature throughout my school days was a sealed book, never thought of or mentioned.

When I left school, at fourteen, the family was living at Moreton House, Wolstanton, a fine old country house, with plenty of land and gardens and outhouses; bakery and brewery and dairy round the kitchen yard; stables, cowhouses, barns round the

stable yard. At such times as I could get away from office work I did carpentering and gardening, and fraternized with grooms and cowmen, and began to learn something.

At the age of sixteen I happened upon a monthly number, in green wrapper, of *The English Mechanic*. I read up the articles in *The Penny Encyclopedia* that touched upon mechanics and science of any kind. I began to find what I was really fit for. I began to construct batteries and coils of the most absurdly inefficient design, having no real information and no assistance. But I still remember my excitement on getting a deflection from a self-made battery and galvanometer constructed out of a pocket compass; and, later on, getting the semblance of electric light from the graphite of two pencils, to which wires were attached. I discovered, subjectively, the extra current produced in an electromagnet by pulling a keeper off. All this had to be done underground, so to speak, for it wasn't attending to business: it was a rational and absorbing sort of play. But, alas for those years when, under proper tuition, I might have been learning so much more! But my capacity for work was very great; and though for the most part I only had odds and ends of time to utilize, I did use them to the utmost.

Age 25.

Then came a time when I heard of the London University, in which people could graduate without attendance. I heard of it through the Queen opening the new buildings in Burlington Gardens, now unfortunately abandoned. So I began to take up my school studies again, and work for its Matriculation, though as a rather belated student, by home study. My success in this rather astonished my father; and he allowed me to spend a winter in London.

As a boy I had indeed been allowed a previous winter in London; and that was influential and important, though entirely obscure. The second visit was spent as an all-day worker in the Chemical Laboratory of the Royal College of Science, South Kensington, with attendance at lectures by Huxley, Guthrie, and Frankland, at the age of nineteen or twenty. I had the pleasure and the surprise of coming out top of the list of a long roll of chemical students that year. I generally did well in examinations.

My first visit was at the age of sixteen, when the aunt already mentioned invited me to come out of the business atmosphere of home for a time, and begin some regular study. This winter I suppose constituted a sort of turning-point in my life; for though the regular classes I attended were only some on Geology and other subjects at King's College and elsewhere, it was during that time that, by a sort of accident, I managed to gain admission to a course of six lectures by John Tyndall to working men, at the School of Mines in Jermyn Street, on Heat. I can hardly suppose that anyone ever attended a course of lectures with more undiluted enthusiasm. They were illustrated by copious experiments which at that time were mostly new to me, and they were reproduced in his well-known book, "Heat a Mode of Motion"—a book which I still consider may be well recommended to boys with the beginnings of scientific instincts. Tyndall remained for many years my ideal of a scientific man; and it was through him I became enthused with the work and writings and scientific atmosphere of Faraday. Faraday himself I never had the privilege of hearing; but I devoured all his writings, and felt as if I had known him. Tyndall set me on the path to Physics, and I felt that it was the subject I was born for. It was not till much later that I entered on the mathematical study of the subject, and gradually realized that the clear ideas and illustrations of Tyndall were only a beginning, a skirting round the edge of a vast territory, which at that time I had not even the tools to explore. Nevertheless, for long afterwards, whenever Tyndall lectured either at the Royal Institution or elsewhere, I made a push to hear him whenever possible. And of course I read not only his "Heat" and "Sound" and "Light," but also his excursions into Religion and semi-theological topics; thus gradually becoming introduced to the popular writings of Huxley also, and of Clifford and others; in fact, to what it became the fashion to call "the materialistic school."

My aunt, however, was a very religious though a broad-minded woman, a close personal friend of the Rev. James Moorhouse, then Vicar of St. John's, Fitzroy Square; and her object in having me up to London was to prepare me for confirmation. She had plenty of sympathy for scientific subjects, without much knowledge of them. But her real interest was Religion, of what is called the "Evangelical" type. Mr. Moorhouse was a very active parson, and

held classes in a Workmen's Institute, mainly for intelligent *employés* of Messrs. Spottiswoode, the printers, and other members of his congregation. These also as a boy I attended. And whenever he dropped in to tea with my aunt, as he often did, I listened with rapt attention to his fluent and indeed eloquent conversation. I also heard his sermons twice every Sunday.

Thus I was subject to two dominant influences; and I cannot but feel that those influences have swayed my life. I was fascinated by both sides; eager for the truth in any direction, not caring whether the teachings were compatible or not, and absorbing all that I could get, without knowing or troubling about what the outcome would be.

The teaching sounds desultory, and certainly it was not systematic. But neither was it idle or slipshod. It was my aunt's fashion to take notes of any sermons or lectures, or even of conversations, either at the time or as soon as possible afterwards: and I acquired the same habit. Indeed, I devised and trained myself in a kind of shorthand (unfortunately not the orthodox kind), with which I was able to take down discourses almost verbatim, and write them out afterwards. I filled a number of notebooks in this way; now completely lost. And when I read, I read with paper and pencil, making long extracts; and thus acquired a habit of serious study, which I do not find so prevalent among the students who attend regular college lectures and have more advantages. I knew that the time was short, and must be utilized to the utmost; and when, at the end of the winter, I went back to business, it was to continue work of the same kind far into the evening and the night. I must indeed have overdone it; for the "wet towel round the head" proverbially attributed to the earnest student was in my case not a figure of speech, but sometimes a reality. I used to jot down in a diary the hours I had worked each day; and on the days that I could get off business they often mounted to thirteen. Six hours I could usually manage somehow, even on business days; for the business involved some travelling, and there were opportunities for doing trigonometry and the like in railway carriages, trams, and waiting-rooms. It is a wonder my eyes did not give out; at one time they did give trouble. The usual distractions of youth never appealed to me; and I can honestly say that at this period of my life I hardly ever wasted a quarter of an hour. And by "this period" I mean the time from sixteen to the time I went to University College.

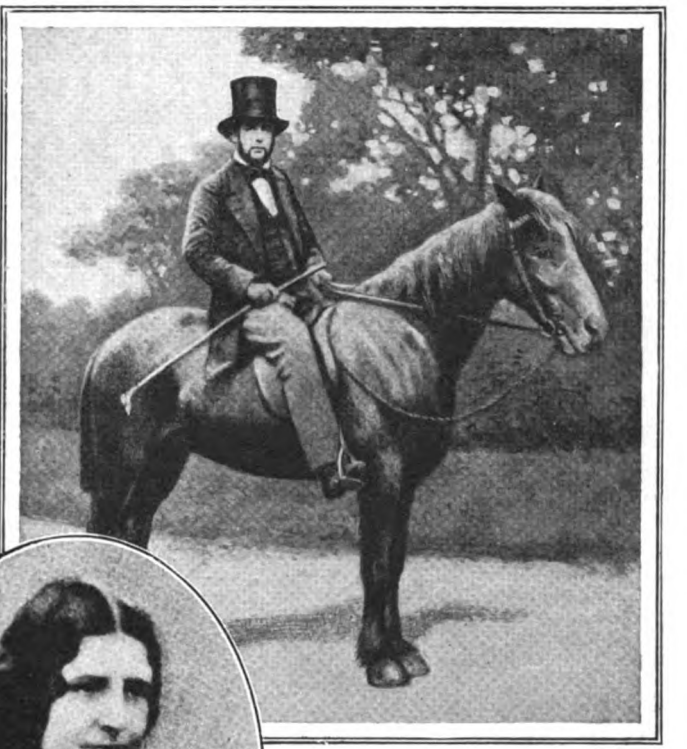
I was keenly interested in Mathematics, though I had never had real teaching in them; and my ambition was to go to Cambridge. That, however, was not permitted. But in the long run it was perceived that my bent did not lie in business, in spite of the merchantry of potters' materials having been converted into "Oliver Lodge and Son," I being the son; a younger brother was found to take my place, and at twenty-two or twenty-three I was released to set out for University College, taking as many classes as I could, but studying especially Mathematics under Henrici and Clifford, and Physics under one who became my close personal friend, George Carey Foster. Indeed, it was he who made my stay at the College possible. He found that I already knew his First Year subject, and entrusted me with subordinate teaching in it and with the management of exercise classes, in which problems were set for the students to work out. And for this assistance he gave me a salary which enabled me, after a fashion, to live, in one room. For I was a revolter from home; and though I received more or less surreptitious hampers from my mother, I did not receive pecuniary aid.

These seem trivial details; but they suffice to show how concentrated I was upon the work, and how perfectly absorbing it was.

BUT to revert to my mental outlook, such as it was. The Theology of the religious people and the materialistic enthusiasm of the scientific people were inevitably in conflict. The conflict of that period is represented poetically in Tennyson's "In Memoriam," in Draper, in Clodd, in Kingsley, in Matthew Arnold, and many other books —all of which I absorbed. Not until I began psychic studies, at a much later stage, did I see the reconciliation. The controversy gave me no emotional trouble: I instinctively felt that there was truth on both sides. I also felt that I was incompetent to philosophize and unify the different aspects of truth. I was content to wait. I did indeed study some Philosophy, of the type of Bain, and to some extent Herbert Spencer; attending a year's course of lectures by Croom Robertson, and receiving his commendation for certain essays on subjects which he set to the class.

I also studied some Physiology and Zoology and Botany: the latter under Professor Daniel Oliver, who arrived from Kew punctually before eight a.m. In fact, there was no branch of Science which I did not make some attempt to study; with a result which in detail no doubt is insignificant, but which did conduce to a comprehensive view, such as I find specialists are rather lacking in. Specialists have a splendid knowledge of

their particular branch; but there is room for all sorts. And—whether it be a strength or a weakness—I can hardly be called a specialist. It may be that I tried to cover too much ground; but I had great assimilative power and a retentive memory; and everything I learned made some sort of impression. I am surprised sometimes to find how much, even now, I half remember as the result of the strenuous work of those early days. I have worked, indeed, all my life, but never so hard as I did then. And even the old Latin and Greek linguistic grind, though it seemed futile at the time, and though it has grown rusty with disuse, yet that must have produced some effect, if only in the selection of words for translation, and in the fairly easy employment of English, which I would not be without. And, besides all that, it has turned out serviceable in connection with psychic studies. For some of the "communications" which come through contain allusions and are couched in language which, without some training in those directions, would be less intelligible than they are. And though I have no claim to scholarship, yet I just know enough to be able to appreciate the language, and the accuracy, and the literary allusions of Scholars, with an enjoyment which is not common, or does not appear to be common, among most of my scientific colleagues.



A portrait of Sir Oliver Lodge's father, taken about 1866.

Sir Oliver Lodge's mother.

The beginnings of any subject are fairly easy. To go deep into any subject is supremely difficult. Perhaps it is only possible in one selected branch. A general survey must be more or less superficial; yet all knowledge must possess a unity, if only it can be grasped. And even though the attempt to grasp it may fail, yet the effort cannot be wholly bad. If made with a due realization of inadequate knowledge, and a full sense of imperfect acquaintance with details, the effort must be wholesome for the individual, and may possibly bear fruit in service to others.

Next month's article in this series will be by the Rt. Hon. Austen Chamberlain, M.P.

Lizer got a seat in the front row with a clear view of the stage. The band crashed. Out went the lights, and then——

The DANCE

by

J. C. Snaith

ELSE was five and a wonder. She could go to the public and get father's beer. She could turn the mangle. She could clean boots and knives, scrub floors, and at a pinch black-lead the kitchen grate. But when all was said her long suit was running errands.

At running errands she was a corker. With any sum up to threepence she could be trusted, and she always came back with the change. If father wanted half an ounce of shag or mother twopenn'orth of cheese, some matches, or a Bath brick, Else could negotiate the contract. And sometimes without the ready, which, as father owned, was where even he was beat. Not a grocer in the Square, nor a tobacconist either, would give father tick for a sanguinary thing, but Else was a one at working the oracle.

But even Else was not perfect. She would linger. No use mincing it. She would linger. Hurdy-gurdies were her undoing. Those damthings—father's phrase—were always lurking around the Square and were played as a rule by a real Hightalian lady. Yet it was not the player of the damthing, it was what the damthing played that undid Else. As sure as eggs, the instant she heard some new and beautiful pantomime tune, down on the pavement went basket or jug or whatnot, she spread her skirts like a fairy, and began to dance like fun.

Mother said that if she persisted something dreadful would happen to her. She knew of little girls who had been carried off by Hightalians; she knew of little girls being locked up by the pleece. It was against the law to dance in front of a public. As for setting your jug on the pavement, well, father's strap had a word to say in that matter. But it was no use. Strap or no strap, pleece or no pleece, Else continued to linger.

Hurdy-gurdies were stronger than she. Mother thought they must have the Old Boy inside. Else was inclined to agree. In her experience all the nice things had the O.B. inside. And she had such a fondness for nice things that if, said mother, she didn't watch it she would go to the Bad Place.

One morning a gentleman called. Else's heart sank. She had been lingering as usual. And when father returned from the Willing Mind, which was not the public in the Square, but half a mile off where the booze was cheaper, he would be sure to find out —and Else knew what that meant. But the gentleman also was an important matter.

He was so pleasant and smiling and friendly that he might have been the Old One himself. Anyhow, he could hardly be the School Board officer, a mysterious personage of whom Else and her friends lived in terror. He was not a pleeceman neither. And he was dressed that grand. Spats and a fancy vest, a diamond pin and a yellow-plush hat, he was like a coloured advertisement for somebody's whisky.

"Your little girl, ma'am?" The gentleman's voice was so sugary, his smile so

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of the ROSES

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J. DEWAR MILLS

bland, that Else didn't much care if he was You Know Who. And she didn't much care if he had come for her. No matter what he did, he couldn't hurt worse than father's strap. Besides, he looked and spoke so nice he mightn't be that wicked after all.

"Yes, sir, my little girl."

"Can I speak to you about her?" The visitor looked at Else and added, "Privately."

"Child, run with that parcel to Mrs. Duke's." Mother took in washing. "And don't linger," she added, sharply.

Else didn't linger. She was too excited. But it was a full twenty minutes to Mrs. Duke's and back, as fast as foot could fly. Even then the gentleman was still talking to mother privately. But as soon as Else returned he broke off short.

"Well, think it over, ma'am," Else heard him say.

"I'll have to talk to me husband about it." The voice hardly sounded like mother's, it was that queer and tight.

"Yes, talk to your husband. And I'll come back for the answer this day week." As the visitor got up from the only chair that was fit to sit on, he turned to Else. "What's your name, little girl?"

——She came in on her toes, skirts outspread.

"Please, sir—it's Else, sir." Mother had learned her her manners.

"Well, Else, this is for you." The gentleman did an amazing thing. He put his hand in his pocket and produced a whole half-crown. An entire, a complete, an incredible half-crown. Else was all of a wobble, but with great natural prudence she fumbled for what she was pleased to call her pocket. The gentleman laughed. "No use putting it there, my dear. It's sure to burn a hole right through it. Buy some lollipops."

Else thrilled. Sure to burn a hole right through her pocket! Her prophetic soul. If not really the Old One himself, this nice gentleman who handed around incandescent half-crowns must be in touch with headquarters.

"What do you say to the gentleman's kindness?"

"T-thank you, sir," gasped Else, with parched lips. Already that amazing coin had begun to sizzle in the palm of her hand.

A WEEK is a long time when you are as young as Else. Much can happen in it. Before the strange gentleman came back for his answer—and whatever it might be Else had no means of knowing—she seemed to live through interminable hours. Somehow she guessed that the answer concerned herself. It also concerned her parents.

Mister Jerry Durkin was not Else's real father. The real father of Else had been killed by the Boers. Killed before she was born. Mother kept his picture somewhere. Once she had shown it Else. A young man in uniform, very straight and clean and soldierly, he was quite different from his successor. Father the second was fat and ugly, the language he used was awful, and he didn't believe in work.

Husband and wife were much exercised in mind. Else would wake up in the middle of the night from some queer and frightening dream and hear their voices going clack-clack in the bed the other side the thin wall. She was sure they were discussing the answer to the mysterious visitor. What it could be she hadn't a notion, but she was more than ever convinced that it concerned herself.

The night before the week was up Else could bear the suspense no longer. She woke and heard those voices. And though it was still dark and she was always afraid of the Bogey, she crept from her bed and laid her ear to the keyhole of the next room.

"Three hundred quid is three hundred quid, I tell yer, times like these"—father's voice. "I got no work and I don't look like getting none. An' the appetite of a growing kid is something fearful. And then there's her clothes and her boots and her education. If she don't go to school soon we'll have the officer around. Three hundred quid'll tide us over a bad time. And as far as the kid is concerned we'll have no more worry an' expense."

Else listened tensely for the voice of mother. But mother said nothing. As usual, it was father who did the talking. Yet the silence of the night was disturbed by mysterious sounds. It was as if mother was crying to herself gently. She did sometimes. More than once she had heard father threaten "to quiet her if she didn't drop it."

No, mother couldn't be crying. At any rate, Else listened in vain for father's usual threat. "Three hundred quid is three hundred quid, I tell yer, when you are out o' work." That was all that father said.

Else returned to her bed, not to sleep and not to dream. "No more worry and expense." Yes, it was herself. She pulled the patchwork quilt around her, which only in the summer had the power to keep her warm. Perhaps it would mean more bedclothes and nicer things to eat. She had not been allowed to spend the half-crown, but there might be others where that one came from.

The day for the answer dawned at last. As soon as Else had helped with father's breakfast and had consumed her own bread and dripping—father's was two rashers of the best Danish—she was told by mother to go into the scullery and wash her face kearful and to put on a clean pinner.

"The gentleman's coming," said mother in a funny tight voice, which Else would never have recognized if she hadn't known it was hers.

It was near eleven when the gentleman came. He drove up to the door in a taxi. To the best of Else's recollection it was the very first taxi seen in Spicer's Alley since the one father used to drive before the pleece took away his licence. It made a sensation when it drew up at Number Seven—Else's number.

Father, who had actually shaved for once and had put on a collar, opened the door personally and showed the gentleman into the setting-room. They talked a bit together. Then mother joined them in her best white apron, which, however, was no whiter than her face. Then they talked a bit more. Then mother fetched Else.

"Good morning, my dear." The visitor's greeting was most haffable.

"Say good morning to the gentleman," mother whispered, fiercely.

Cool as a cumber Else said good morning and curtsied.

"Nice manners." The gentleman smiled.

"You bet she 'ave"—father's voice. "Manners of a lydy. A comfort in the 'ome."

Else was surprised. It was the first compliment father had ever paid her. She was a little confused by it. Father drew her aside and whispered: "How'd you like to go with the gent?"

No answer from Else.

"Hey, what do you say?"

"I don't know."

"You gotta know. Plenty good things to eat."

Else appeared to hesitate.

"An' no strap."

That decided her. Yes, she would go with the gentleman.

ELSE went away in the taxi with the gentleman. She was accompanied by her all in a small tin box. It held two broken dolls, a change of undies, her second best pinner, and her woollen nightgown. Mother gave her one hungry clasp and dropped a hot tear over her, while father signed a paper which the gentleman read over to him in a very smooth voice. And then for Else the taxi, excitement, romance, Elysium.

For days and weeks and months after her departure Lizer Durkin was tormented as to whether she had done right. She had entered into a solemn pact not to see the child again or to make any subsequent claim upon her; and the gentleman on his part had paid over the sum of three hundred pounds and given an undertaking equally solemn that she should be brought up a lady.

"But of course it won't do," said the gentleman, "for her parents to be demanding her back when she is in the midst of an expensive education. That would be a waste of good money, you know." The gentleman, in his polite way, was perfectly frank.

"So long as you pay three hundred quid on the nail," said father, "it'll be all right." Easy to say that, because as far as Mr. Jerry Durkin was concerned the sacred word "father" was only a courtesy title. But for Lizer, who was parting for ever with flesh of her flesh, it seemed more difficult. However, the visitor, who was very smooth-spoke, with a rare gift of words, and with Jerry to back him, managed to persuade her that as far as the child was concerned it would be for the best.

Yet was it? With no Else to run errands and to bring in the news—she was always a one for the news—and to lay the breakfast and to lend a hand in the scullery, it took mother many long and weary months to convince herself. In fact, she never did convince herself quite.

Of course, there was the three hundred pounds. Jerry had no doubt as to the soundness of the transaction, but Lizer could never rid herself of a feeling that a curse was on the money. It brought no luck. Jerry gave up all idea of work. He went oftener to the public, stayed there longer, and used her worse when he got home.

Lizer grew to realize that this was a judgment on her. More than once she had to stay indoors on account of the terrible black eye Jerry had given her. And she who had always kept herself respectable and was determined to do so to the end was that ashamed she dursent show herself to the neighbours.

In the twilit mind of Lizer Durkin, which had never been trained to reason things out for itself, one fear succeeded another fear; the shadow of calamity was always upon it. But if only she could keep on observing certain grim social laws, she might hope for reward in the end. And the same applied to everybody, great or small, rich or poor. It was this which impelled an unhappy woman to kneel every night before entering the vacant bed—she slept no longer with her drunken husband—and to offer her simple prayer: "Our Father, who art in Heaven, bless our Else and keep her respectable. Amen."

It was not a great deal to ask, yet many times it seemed to Lizer Durkin that in the circumstances it was too much to expect that prayer to be answered.

ONE morning, near the end of a long and bitter winter, Jerry decided that he would not get up. For weeks he had had a cough upon him, and he had been awake all night with a pain in the chest that hurt something cruel. Lizer brought his breakfast, but he couldn't look at it; and this was such a bad sign that she went at once for the doctor.

"Both lungs," said Dr. Jeeves, with a shake of the head, as soon as he had sounded him. "I'll send the parish nurse. He's not fit to be moved to the hospital."

By the time the parish nurse, Miss Royce by name, had arrived Jerry was raving. Between awful struggles for his breath he was demanding drink with even more awful menaces. "Water's no sanguinary use ter me."

"Doctor says he mon't have nothing stronger at present. He's fair poisoned with drink."

Miss Royce fervently agreed. She did not tell Mrs. Durkin that her husband was so steeped in alcohol that he had no chance. But Lizer was free to guess. Before the

night was out Jerry's ravings grew feebler; the nurse, at frequent intervals, moistened the blue and swollen lips with brandy; but a snowy March dawn announced the world was poorer—if it was the poorer—by a bad man.

"A good riddance," reflected Miss Royce as she put on her bonnet. Jerry Durkin had an evil reputation. "That's the three hundred pounds," reflected his wife. "If he'd stuck to beer he'd have lived another ten year. Doctor says it's the whisky that's done him."

Lizer Durkin was now very lonely. There was no one to knock her about. Jerry had drunk every penny of the three hundred pounds, and there were debts on the top of it. His widow had to slave to keep body and soul together. She was a good worker and seldom lacked a day's charing. But life was terribly

monotonous with neither kith nor kin to take an interest in you when at night you returned to your attic completely fagged out.

Slowly the years wore on. And Lizer with them. Life had nothing to offer her beyond a memory, nothing to hold her except a fetish. Night by night, after she had made her private prayer, her thoughts wandered to the child she had sold. Please God it was not to something worse than slavery. But there was no telling. Money means corruption; at least, that was Lizer's view of that greater world of which she knew nothing. Easier, said the Bible, for the camel to pass through the needle's eye than for the rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

herself to believe that Else's going was for the best. It meant education—what would Lizer not have given to have had education!—good clothes to wear, nice things to eat. But such luxuries can be bought too dear. Dimly she had felt that at the time. Every year that passed drove the fact

Father drew her aside and whispered: "How'd you like to go with the gent?"

To the literal mind of Lizer these words meant what they said. And they frightened her. What if she, who hoped to lay up treasure for the time to come by always keeping herself respectable, had cast her only child into outer darkness?

Through the years this shadow tormented her. At the time she had forced home. Lonely and poor as Lizer Durkin was, no one ever questioned her respectability. But what of the child that had once been hers?

Time, they say, is a cure for all things. But the years contrived new trials for the soul of Lizer Durkin.

One evening, after a hard day, she was

in her attic, making herself a cup of tea before going to bed, when there came a knock on the door.

"Come in," called Lizer.

Mother Moul entered. Among the dozen or so charwomen who lived in or around the Tenements she ranked as the *doyenne*. She had seen better days, had Mother Moul, she knew a thing or two! But the strait-laced Lizer did not approve of her altogether. This evening there was about her a look, not to say an odour, of gin.

"Good evening, Lizer. Would you like my job at the Hippodrome?"

It was clear from the visitor's manner that Lizer was expected to jump at the offer. But she didn't.

"Hippodrome?" Lizer's lip was inclined to curl. "Where them painted hussies perform?"

"You come off of it, Lizer." Mother Moul was stern. "Best job around here, take it from me. Regular work, regular pay, and plenty of grub in the middle o' the day."

The old story. All the best billets, all the cushy jobs, were in the patronage of the Enemy.

"I've always kep' myself respectable."

"Respectable be sugared." Mother Moul was terse. "If you don't fancy the Hippodrome, there's plenty as does."

"Why you givin' it up, mother?" Lizer played for time.

"I got a pain here." The visitor pressed her left side. "Got to go into the infirmary to-morrow. And you can have my job till I come out—if I ever do come out—and you're not too proud to take it. But, as I say, it won't go begging."

"Then why did yer bring it to me?"

"Because you're straight. If I get well you're not the sort as will want to pinch it."

The next morning Lizer, complete with apron and scrubber, presented herself at the Hippodrome. She had overcome her scruples, or rather, for the time being, the sarcasm of Mother Moul had overcome them for her. The work was hard, but it was regular, it was paid for at top rates, and the grub was prime. Yet on the evening of the very first day occurred an incident which altered everything for Lizer.

SHE had put on her hat and shawl, and was just about to pass out of the building when her eye was suddenly caught by a large photograph stuck up on the wall of the vestibule. It was a full-length of a girl of fifteen dressed as a fairy. Lizer gave a gasp. There was no deceiving her. In spite of the wings and the star, the scanty attire, the painted face, and the hair so wonderfully crimped and curled, Lizer would have known that fairy anywhere. It was Else.

With trembling fingers Lizer fumbled for her spectacles. The three R's were not her strong point, but letter by letter she was able to spell out the words at the foot of the frame. "La Favorita, the peerless child dancer, who will appear this evening in the new and gorgeous ballet, the Dance of the Roses."

Again Lizer gasped. Her child, the child of the man she had loved, was now a painted hussy. Conscience long ago had warned her that one day she would be bound to pay a bitter price. Well, there before her eyes was the price in all its grimness. Yet after the first impact of wonder and remorse something even more powerful than conscience spoke to Lizer Durkin.

Instinct it was that arose and uttered. Instead of sending her to a cheerless garret, instinct drove Lizer to the tea-shop opposite the Hippodrome, where she invested a careful but excited fourpence; instinct again which made her line up for the gallery, ninepence including tax. Deep in her heart she believed a theatre to be a vile place. Her own good mother always said so. Never would she allow child of hers to set foot in such a palace of iniquity. Lizer had always tried to live up to that precept and that example. But this evening her long-lost flesh and blood was to dance in that glittering hall, and an irresistible something took hold of Lizer Durkin.

She stood two hours for the gallery and got a seat in the front row with a clear view of the stage. Never in her life had she been so excited.

The band crashed. Out went the lights. The curtain rose. Lizer entered fairyland. She could not have believed it to be possible. Beauty, colour, music, all was magic. Never, never, except in the dreams of early childhood, had life permitted things like these. Forbidden rapture, nefarious delight. She held her breath in an ecstasy. Crashed the music. Gleamed the lights. All was a wild intoxication of sight and of sound. There was a pause. And then a burst of cheers from a crowded house, and then—and then——

She came in on her toes, skirts outspread. It was just as she used to dance to the hurdy-gurdy in the Square. And she had the smile of Charley, the man Lizer had loved, whom the Boers had killed. Yet all else about her was new and strange. As for the music, it was lovely, liquid, all alive. It was like harps in the air. And the colour, the rhythm—yes, the roses were dancing. The roses were dancing. Lizer caught a glimpse of the Beyond.

There was a sudden commotion in the

front row of the gallery. A funny, poor, oldish creature in a crushed bonnet and a plaid shawl had gone off in a dead faint.

FROM that wonderful hour life for Lizer Durkin took on a new aspect. Somehow it grew richer, more complex. Things were never quite the same. Even if her child was painted and exposed in very few clothes nightly to the public eye, she was now part of a vague hope which arose in Lizer! The Dance of the Roses might be the devil and all his works, but, strange paradox! it was impossible for Lizer Durkin to imagine anything more heavenly. She had been brought up to believe that the Salvation ladies shaking their tambourines at street corners to the accompaniment of strident brass were the authentic guides to eternal bliss. But give her Else and the Roses. No doubt she was very wicked to have such feelings, but give her Else and the Roses every time!

Nothing in the drab life of Lizer Durkin had half their significance. Beauty, rhythm, harmony; ravishment of the ear and of the eye. It was her idea of the eternal. As for her child not being respectable, what said the Bible? Let him without sin cast the first stone.

Courage was needed to live up to this faith. But Lizer sometimes had doubted if there really was a God in the world. Things were done to you that made you feel there couldn't be. Or perhaps she had been serving under the wrong banner. Anyhow, from that time the Dance of the Roses was her idea of Heaven.

Now that miraculously she had found Else she hoped never to lose her again. Yet how keep touch of her? Lizer had no thought of breaking a solemn vow. She must not approach the child. A promise is a promise; besides, the world being the place that it was, harm would be done the girl if it became known that her mother was the likes of her.

Lizer did not stay on at the Hippodrome. One day, contrary to expectation, Mother Moul turned up again. But a few months later a second piece of luck came Lizer's way. She put in for the Free Library, a permanent job, and got it. By seven o'clock in the morning of every day, summer and winter, hail or shine, she was on her knees with pail and scrubber doing the big floors and the long stone steps.

THE grinding years wore on. La Favorita never came again to the Hippodrome, nor, as far as her mother knew, to the city of her birth. Once more she passed from Lizer's ken; yet somehow the mother never quite lost the vision the Dance of the Roses had inspired. She had had a glimpse of the Something Else. Back of everything was the magic key that wound up the world and set it spinning in harmonious waves of music, beauty, love.

Every week Lizer scanned the pages of *The Tatler* and *The Sketch* which lay on the table in the reading-room. Always she had a hope of seeing a portrait of La Favorita, the famous child-dancer. But time passed. The mother grew dispirited. It surely seemed that Else had vanished from her life for ever. And then one Thursday morning she saw a thing that made her heart turn in her side: a whole-page photograph of a beautiful girl in a classical robe. "Miss Regina Palliser, the famous English dancer, who has taken New York by storm."

Once more the name was changed. But to the ravished sight of Lizer Durkin there was no mistaking her. Charley's girl. The eyes, the curls, the poise of the lissom body were exactly as they had been engraved upon her memory.

Somehow that wonderful picture enabled Lizer to carry on. Her strength and her courage were not what they had been; she seemed to be losing heart in an unequal battle with destiny, but the sight of Else renewed her force. That evening as Lizer trudged home to her cheerless lodging she called at a newsagent's and invested a shilling in a copy of *The Tatler*. She tore out the page and nailed up the portrait of Miss Regina Palliser over the chimney-piece.

On Saturday afternoon Mother Moul looked in for a cup of tea and a gossip. She often did about four o'clock on that day, being pretty sure to find Lizer at home. More than one good turn had she done Lizer Durkin. All the same, Mother Moul had a history, and she had a tongue.

"My eyesight, Lizer!" The visitor caught at once the compelling picture above the chimneypiece. "Goin' it, ain'tcher? That long-lost daughter o' yours, hey?"

The friendship with Mother Moul was later than the Else period. She had no reason to suspect that Lizer had a daughter. The secret had always been jealously guarded. It was no more than Mother Moul's idea of "being funny," but at such a moment chaff was more than Lizer could bear. Somehow it hit her on the raw.

"Yes, it's me daughter." Defiance was in the tone. The sting of Mother Moul's sneer made Lizer see red.

"Easy to look at," sneered Mother Moul. "And like her ma, I must say."

"Daughter o' my first husband. Him as was killed by the Boers."

Mother Moul eyed her curiously. Again she looked at Miss Regina Palliser. Slowly

she drew a finger along a sharp and ironical nose.

"Don't believe me, I can see."

"Oh, yes, Lizer, *I* believe yer. But there's them as wouldn't."

Mother Moul pursed mocking lips. Poor Lizer Durkin was going dotty.

FROM that hour Lizer Durkin lost caste in the Tenements. The word went round that she was a bit touched. Women of her age and way of life often went that way. Nothing to her discredit, poor soul, but it did her no good socially. Speculation grew rife as to how long she would be able to keep that billet at the Free Library. It was regarded as one of the plums of the profession. And at the Free Library they were that particular they were not likely to tolerate a char with a kink in her brain.

Howbeit, to the general surprise, Lizer Durkin managed to stay on. But she had so much rough chaff to endure from the ill-natured and the envious that she could have torn out her tongue. What a fool she had been! She might at least have kept her silly face shut about Else.

Mother Moul, with her sense of humour, promptly christened Miss Regina Palliser's mother "Mademoiselle Jinny." It was considered a very rich joke by the select few who were able to appreciate it.

Gradually it appeared that Lizer was living down that unlucky reference to "me daughter." Other charladies grew less free with winks and nudges when they found themselves in the company of Miss Regina Palliser's mother. Lizer began to hope that her folly was buried. But it wasn't quite.

One evening she was stopped in the street by Mother Moul, who produced a bit of newspaper from a disreputable handbag. "Me daughter, I see, has married a hearl." Never had Mother Moul looked so wickedly knowing. "But you never said a word about it, Lizer, you're that close with your affairs."

Grimly defiant, Lizer opened the slip of paper and read: "New York, Wednesday. The Earl of Cornford was married here this afternoon to Miss Regina Palliser, the famous dancer."

Hostile eyes raked Lizer's face: eyes of deep scorn, yet not without a faint gleam of pity. "Being ma to a countess, you'll not know the scum." Mother Moul bared yellow fangs and spat.

Lizer did not speak. It was as if the venomous sarcasm had paralysed her.

"Don't think I blame yer, Lizer. Beg parding. Mrs. Durkin, I meant to say. If I was in your place I'd set a value on myself. With me own daughter a real live countess, do you think I'd have any truck with the common-a-ligh-ity? Not me!"

In the privacy of her attic, over the evening brew, Lizer read the paper a second time. The stabs of Mother Moul had cut to the bone. Serve her right for being such a fool. And suppose after all she had deceived herself? Suppose Miss Regina Palliser was not her daughter? Where was the proof? There was nothing to go on except a superficial likeness to Else. It was hardly feasible that Else had grown so beautiful and so famous.

She forced her mind to dismiss the subject. But Mother Moul and her friends ordained otherwise. Whenever they met her they made a point of addressing her as Countess, with a leer upon their faces and a gleam of malice in their eyes.

"That's what you get for boasting," was Lizer's reflection. "And, come to think of it, I must be crazy."

A new bitterness entered Lizer's heart. If, after all, she was self-deceived, and the world was justified in its sharp scorn, it had been far better that Else had never come back into her life. And the Dance of the Roses, with its glimpse of Heaven, that was a mirage. What said the Bible? Nothing good can come out of a vile place. The Dance of the Roses was one more devil's trick.

Doubt struck home. Her strength declined. The old courage began to fail. She shunned her acquaintances. If she saw Mother Moul coming along one street, she turned hastily down the next. Her sole ambition now was to keep herself to herself, to say nothing to nobody. But even this simple scheme was not easy. Mother Moul and her peers could not be avoided always, for they took a hearty pleasure in goading the Countess.

Fate, moreover, seemed to play into their hands. Not that Lizer Durkin called the great mystery by a name so grand. But Something always seemed to be tripping her up and making things easy for those whom she now considered to be her enemies.

One evening, two long and weary years after the news of Else's marriage, a poster on a hoarding in a by-street near the Tenements caught Lizer's eye. It was a name in large type in the middle of the bill that really fixed her attention. The Countess of Cornford had kindly consented to lay the foundation-stone of the new wing of the Royal Free Hospital on the fifth of May. That title was oddly familiar. For generations the Earls of Cornford had been foremost among the local big-wigs; a household word in the mouths of its citizens. But the announcement itself had a deeper interest for Lizer Durkin.

Why it should have, Lizer, for a moment, didn't know. She stood pondering the bill, hunting a reason for the queer feeling that had come over her. And then, suddenly, Fate—or What You Will—had a word to say.

"I'd ride horses with nice long tails
If my Pa was the Prince of Wales."

A ribald voice, richly compounded of gin and fog, breathed in Lizer's ear. Mother Moul, that lively fount of humour and sarcasm, had caught her unawares.

"Me daughter, the Countess, a-comin' to the horsepital on the fifth of May."

Lizer faced her tormentress. It was like a knife being driven into her flesh. Memory swung back. She felt a queer dragging sort of agony.

"You'll be there, duckie, on May the fifth. And you won't know the common-a-ligh-ity."

"No, I'll not be there." Weak to say anything, but Lizer had never felt so weak. "I'm nothin' to the likes o' her."

"But your own daughter, duckie." Mother Moul gave the knife a twist. "Blood's thicker than water. You'll have to be among those present."

"No, I won't," gasped Lizer, bleakly.

Mother Moul grinned. "Well, think it over, dearie." And she passed along the street trolling her humorous song :—

"I'd ride horses with nice long tails
If my Pa was the Prince of Wales."

One evening Lizer was stopped in the street by Mother Moul, who produced a bit of newspaper from a disreputable handbag.

Back in her attic Lizer thought it over. The hour appointed was three o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday, May 5th. As luck would have it, she had a half-day free Saturdays; but she soon decided not to seek a glimpse of Else. Nothing good could come of it. Besides—besides, if the Countess, after all, did not happen to be Else!

Better not risk it. In any case, Lizer Durkin would only be a laughing-stock for her friends if she showed her nose among the crowd around the hospital.

Lizer's mind was made up. Yet Fate—or What You Will—had still a card to play. A pretty big card, too. About two o'clock

in the afternoon of the fifth of May, just after Lizer had eaten her frugal lunch and was about to begin the weekly setting-to-rights of her bedroom, she heard a familiar step on the stairs. It was Mother Moul.

"Git your shawl and bonnet, duckie." The visitor was in high feather. "Here's a pass for two for the horsepital private grounds. We'll have a close-up of everything without being shoved in the neck by the common-a-ligh-ity."

Mother Moul flourished a triumphant ticket. For years she had charred at the hospital three mornings a week, and with her usual skill had been able to wangle a pass from one of the officials.

In spite of her humour and her mischief, and her love of gin, there was goodness of heart in Mother Moul. Poor Lizer Durkin might be off her rocker on the subject of the Countess, but the visitor was out to do her a good turn. And she felt that she was doing it.

Taken completely off her guard, Lizer wavered. Her mind had been fully made up. And yet. And yet. Something gave a fierce tug at her vitals. Something deep and powerful, something far stronger than Lizer's will, ordered her imperiously to go at once and get her shawl and bonnet.

It hardly seemed to be Lizer Durkin who accompanied Mother Moul along the squalid street. By no personal volition did she board the tram at its end. Against her own judgment, against her own sense, a powerful magnet was drawing her to the hospital.

Under Mother Moul's guidance there was no difficulty about admittance to the holy of holies, the private grounds of the Royal Free Hospital. They were reserved for the upper crust. For once in her life Lizer had a powerful sense of privilege as she passed through the imposing wrought-iron gates whose crest and motto were picked out in gold. Yet why feel surprised? Fate—or What You Will—had arranged it all. Well it knew that among the three-quarters of a million in that midland city none had a better right than Lizer Durkin to be there.

Half an hour or so she had to wait for the ceremony. But, surrounded by doctors and nurses and a phalanx of local grandees, even the mere anticipation was thrilling. She was actually going to see Else. Yes, she was going to see her very own child, who was now a real live countess. Such a thing was hardly feasible. But there it was. With her heart beating up into her throat, so that she could scarcely breathe, the mother of her ladyship kept her eyes pinned on the distant door, out of which the chief actors in the drama would presently come.

THE door opened at last. Lizer's failing eyes gained fresh light. There she was, a slim, dainty figure in white with a wonderful hat with feathers. As a child of five she had a passion for a hat with feathers. This was Else. This was she.

Accompanied by the Lord Mayor in his robes and chain, by the High Sheriff ditto, by her nice-faced young husband the Earl, and a long procession of other notables, she came down the steps of the great gloomy building into the May sunshine. As she moved, lithe and proud, on to the gay carpet of young grass there was no mistaking her. Lizer's heart leaped madly. Charley's smile. Just his easy way of walking, lovely poise of body, head upthrown, which five-and-twenty years ago had captivated her. She could hardly bear to look. Each movement was the living Charley. Seized by a queer tightening of the breast, she lived again her brief romance. The feel of the sun, the scent of the lawns and the spring flowers sharpened every memory. A May afternoon such as this, five-and-twenty years ago, on the bright grass by the river, he had made her the proudest and the happiest of women. Within the year he was in a hero's grave.

In one searing flash all came back. Fate had used her brutally, but that was not a moment for self-pity. She could not take her eyes from the creature in the Paris frock and the pearls and the wonderful hat with feathers who moved over the grass with the grace of a queen. Charley's girl. Every line of her Charley's girl.

Lizer gazed in rapture. The Mayor's small daughter, a sweet thing in a white silk frock, came forward to meet the Countess. With a curtsy she offered a large posy. Roses white and roses red. The sun caught the laughing eyes as they bent to the child. Her smile, Charley's smile, was most cunningly reflected in the sheer radiance of those dancing petals. Yes, the roses—the roses were dancing!

Something broke suddenly in Lizer's heart. She grew faint and giddy. The grandees, the throng, the green grass, the grim walls of the hospital, the very sun itself began to revolve round her in a mad dance.

"Git me out o' this," Lizer whispered, hoarsely, to Mother Moul. "I can't bear it." And then, faintly, "Take me right away from it all."

Mother Moul gave a side glance of slow contempt. Yet mingled with it was a certain pity. Clean off her rocker, poor thing. She looked as if she had seen a ghost.

"Come on, then, Lizer." She was grasped firmly and competently by the arm. Slowly

Mother Moul led her from the hospital grounds.

Around the massive gates was a large and curious mob. Even if denied the holy of holies it was bent on a sight of the notables. A real live countess was not to be seen every day of the week. And the rumour of her beauty had circulated freely.

"Now, then, Lizer, pull yerself together." Mother Moul grew truculent as they neared the crowd. "Don't make a show of yerself before the folks."

Lizer did her best, but the walls of the hospital were still going round and round. The very gates, a glory of black and gold, began to dance as she staggered through on the arm of Mother Moul.

"Pull yerself together, can't yer?" admonished the truculent voice. "Or they'll think you've had a drop."

She—who—had—always—kept—herself—respectable!

As luck would have it, just beyond the precincts, perched on the edge of the kerb, in the lee of a good-humoured bobby, were Emma Press and Gertie Lightfoot. They were two of Mother Moul's particular cronies, and at all times Lizer Durkin disliked their company. For one thing they belonged, or had once belonged, to a certain class. And like all such they had freedom of manners and tongues like razors. But Mother Moul, that woman of the world, took people as she found them. And she always found Emma and Gertie amusing.

At the sight of Lizer Durkin on the arm of their friend, they began to chi-ike freely.

"Oo my eyesight!"—Emma Press. "Look at us!"

"Close yer face, dearie"—Gertie Lightfoot. "Yer don't suppose the aristocracy is a-goin' to look at the scum."

"Did me daughter lay it pretty?"—Emma Press.

"Yes, duckie"—Mother Moul. "With a real silver trowel, give her by the Lord Mayor."

"I seen her go by in her car with me husband the hearl." Gertie Lightfoot was fond of the sound of her own voice. "Remarkable like her ma, I must say. Just the same bright smile for the common-a-ligh-ity."

"Oh, yes, she's a real lady."

Lizer made a tentative effort to find a way through the crowd.

"What's yer hurry?" Mother Moul gave her arm a sharp tug. "You'll have to wait till she's gone by before you git out o' this."

Emma and Gertie uttered vulgar guffaws. "Countess, stop where you are until me daughter's passed." Everybody around could not fail to hear them. "Stop here till the car goes by and then we'll all go along to the Willing Mind and have a tiddley."

"Yes, we'll all go along to the Willing Mind and have a tiddley." Mother Moul responded gaily to the invitation. And in her exuberance she began again to troll:—

"I'd ride horses with nice long tails
If my Pa was the Prince of Wales."

"Here it is! She's coming! She's coming! Oo, what lovely roses!"

Sighs of admiration from the spectators. A craning of necks. The young Countess looked a picture. But with a suddenness that was incredible, the general enthusiasm was drowned in shrieks of terror.

Nobody knew how the thing occurred. Whether it was caused by a lurch of the crowd or by an act of madness, who shall say? For a thin, oldish woman, very pale, in a shabby black dress and shawl and a crushed bonnet, appeared to fling herself right under the wheels of the car.

The car passed clean over her body.

THE next day, Sunday, as the bells were ringing for morning service, Lady Cornford and a lovely bunch of roses appeared at the hospital. With deep concern she inquired after the poor woman who had been injured so terribly by her car. Was there anything to be done for her? Could she do anything personally to make her more comfortable?

The doctor in charge shook a grave head. Poor thing, it was only a question of hours. Her case was hopeless. There was not a chance for her to live. In response to a look of horror in the candid eyes of the visitor, the doctor said it were better so.

Was she suffering?

He feared yes, but, please God, it would not be for long.

"I should so like her to have these roses." The caller spoke impulsively. "May I take them to her myself?"

The doctor shook a kind, wise head. "It may hurt you to see her," he said.

But like many women who are young and compelling, she was a little imperious in her caprice. She didn't know why she wanted to give the roses personally to the old charwoman her car had injured. Or if she did know, the inner self held the reason apart from the superficial one.

"Very well, Lady Cornford." The doctor reluctantly indulged her whim. Nothing could harm the patient now. "It is you I am thinking of."

"Please, please don't think of me! I feel that I would like to give her these flowers myself."

Lizer gazed in rapture.
She could not take her eyes from the creature in the Paris frock.

IN the ward, so clean and trim, were the stillness and the solemnity of death.

With screens around her and a placid nurse in attendance lay the old woman who had been run over. She was just a mass of white bandages. Little more than her eyes were to be seen. But they were open wide, and she still breathed. And in the orbs themselves, haunted by some intolerable agony, was further evidence of life. No sooner had those eyes perceived the roses than a strange thing happened. A look of rapture transfigured them. The young woman who had brought the roses, as if aware of a magical change, held them close and yet closer to that tragic face. As she bent over the bed in humble ministry to this bit of wreckage, the lips almost subconsciously whispered, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

Deep called unto deep.

"Kiss me, luvvee." The words came from the bed in a faint slow guttural. They were the first Lizer Durkin had spoken since the accident. And they were the last.

Soft arms. Loving lips. She remembered the man she had loved. The child she had borne him was next her broken breast. It was all wonderful. And it was all true. O ye of little faith!

The gates were opening. Pearl white, like the petals of roses. Music. Music celestial. Harps. Harps in the air. Always—kept—herself—respec——Invisible choirs. The petals of roses. Charley's smile. Yes! yes! yes! The roses were dancing. The roses were dancing. The roses——

The Mayor's small daughter came forward to meet the Countess. With a curtsy she offered a large posy. Roses white and roses red.

On an uninhabited Atlantic island a pirates' treasure is reported to be hidden which, so far, shore. Now, however, treasure-seekers are not only to descend on this island

Exploring, Mining, Treasure-hunting, and Weather-making By AEROPLANE

By
HARRY HARPER

I.

ILLUSTRATED BY GEOFFREY WATSON

FLYING is turning, now, another momentous page in its fascinating history —a page fraught with possibilities which are almost illimitable. Marvels are on the point of being accomplished which will eclipse anything we have known before. We talk of aerial wonders. But nothing we have seen, so far, is comparable with these triumphs which impend. In spite of all achievements by which our imaginations have been stirred, the true, full-blooded romance of flying is still to come.

Here, in fact, just dawning, we have an almost priceless benefit that the conquest of the air will confer on man. It will enable him to enrich himself, to an extent almost incalculable, by tapping sources of wealth which have been, and will be, denied him till he is able to come at them by way of the air.

The designs have just been shown me for a vast "exploration" airship—a completely new "clipper of the clouds." It is not a matter of hours, or even days, that this huge metal leviathan will remain in the air. Taking up gold-hunters, or treasure-seekers, it will stay aloft with them, without descending, for weeks on end! Its occupants will eat and sleep and live up in the air, with

has resisted all efforts to unearth it owing to the precipitous, fiercely wave-beaten nature of the from the air, but are to have their provisions dropped for them by parachute.

just as much comfort as in an ocean-going steamer.

And, from the view-point of seeking the world's hidden wealth, you must remember this. These searchers who, by night and day, travel thousands of miles along the aerial highways, will be hindered no longer by earthly obstructions. Towering mountains, vast, impenetrable forests, the huge parched expanses of deserts—none of these, though they foil explorers by land, will check or stay the progress of our new venturers of the sky.

HERE is one actual scheme—more fascinating, surely, than any fiction—which I have just had described to me. Staggering out, years ago, from the fringes of the great Kalahari Desert, in Africa, came an exhausted traveller. He was on the point of death. Soon, indeed, he died. But before collapsing finally he gasped out a tale—and everybody who heard it believed it—of having discovered, within the grim heart of that desert, a veritable "mountain" of precious platinum. And with him, corroborating his story, he had brought a sample of that platinum.

From that day to this, though the tale has survived, weary and dangerous search has revealed nothing. Now, however, a fresh force takes the field, and what is proposed is that explorers of the air, in specially-equipped 'planes, shall seek out that treasure-mountain, and also other riches which deserts and impassable barriers have for so long kept from the hands of man.

If there is anything more intriguing than all this I, for one, should like to be told of it. What, I ask, could have a finer "thrill" than to be up and away, at dawn of day, to "lift" by air some buried treasure which, for centuries, has resisted the efforts of hunters by land or sea?

Actually existing, away out in the vastness of the South Atlantic, is a little rocky island, surf-beaten and desolate, on which—a well-authenticated story shows—a gang of pirates in those bad old days, after rifling the hold of a rich Spanish vessel homeward-bound, had to bury in a panic their ill-gotten gains, for the simple reason that they themselves were being hard-pressed by an avenging ship-of-war; and after this, failing as they did to elude capture, they were prevented by a grim reason from ever retrieving their booty. All of them were, in fact, hanged promptly as a warning to their kind.

More than once, since those bloodthirsty times, there have been attempts to recover the treasure; but land-slides have obscured its exact resting-place, and the island is so cruelly wave-beaten, and landings on it are fraught often with such peril, that, after comparatively brief spells of searching and digging, seekers have been obliged to abandon their quest rather than risk being marooned on the island, with a peril of starvation when their supplies give out.

Not long ago inquiries were set on foot, from a source profoundly secret, to ascertain whether a certain great airship might not be chartered to drop ultra-modern searchers from aloft upon this inaccessible island, and then keep them provided, afterwards, with food and other essentials by way of the air. More recently still, and even while this airship scheme has been under discussion, another plan has been shaping. This is to maintain communication between the island and the distant mainland by the use of great, swift, multi-engined flying-boats, stores being dropped on the island by parachute, quite irrespective of how high a sea may be pounding upon the rocky shores.

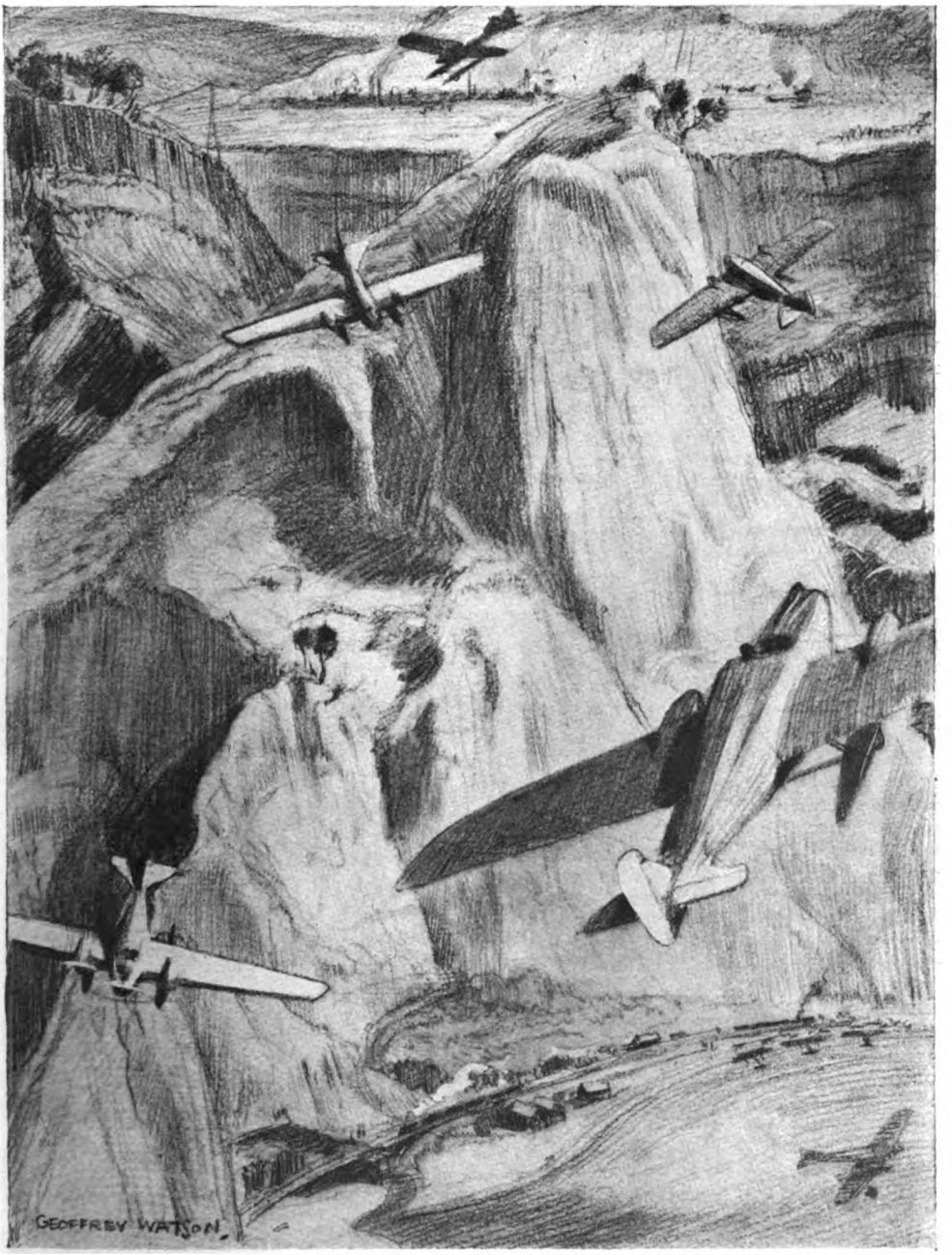
In another of our real-life projects for air-won wealth a Government, as well as mining experts and engineers, is now interested.

This scheme concerns gold, copper, and other wealth, hitherto untapped in the great mountains of Peru. Known to be there, tantalizingly attractive, these riches have, so far, been beyond any practical means of working simply because access to them has been hampered by precipitous mountains and belts of almost impenetrable forest.

Now what is proposed—and the Peruvian authorities are impressed greatly by the proposal—is that these inaccessible mountain mines, with the fortunes they contain, shall be exploited, systematically, by means of regular load-carrying "airways."

Designers are, it should be mentioned, busy already with plans for great "winged lorries," metal-built, which will bear high through the air from the mines down to the coast—passing with ease above forests or ravines—tons of ore which have been quarried from localities unapproachable save to miners who can work them from the air. It is even proposed that machinery, taken to pieces, shall be flown in sections by lorry-planes from the coast far up these formidable mountain-sides, on which alighting spaces will be cleared for the arriving and departing 'planes.

Experts declare, now, that the commercial exploitation of remote mines, hitherto so baffling a problem owing to the obstacles set up by Nature, can be undertaken as a business enterprise by the use of great aeroplanes, fitted with lifting-planes of metal, which will fly regularly over barriers impossible to any normal mode of transport.



One of the newest plans of aerial experts is to establish and operate, entirely by a use of specially-designed weight-carrying "lorry-'planes," mines high up among the mountains of Peru which, owing to the difficulties of land transport between them and the coast, are practically unworkable save by way of the air.

One of the picturesque features of mountain air-mining will be the way in which great winged craft, ore-laden, will come soaring out from some plateau thousands of feet aloft, and will then "switchback" down through the air to a coastal station or depot. After they have used their engines for "taking off," they will make these down-hill glides without motive-power—thus, of course, saving fuel.

Exploring, etc., by Aeroplane

II.

PERHAPS the most romantic—and at the same time most practical—of all air schemes about to be realized is the opening up of mineral wealth in remote Northern territories, where the rigours of the climate, combined with natural barriers of forests, mountains, and roaring rivers, have, hitherto, prevented anything more than a partial and hurried survey.

One of the most remarkable expeditions ever setting forth to seek adventure is to include air-pilots, engineers, and skilled authorities upon all forms of minerals, together with several captains of industry and other advisers. The vehicle in which they will travel will be like no other craft designed before. It will have the long, graceful hull of a sea-going yacht. It is, in fact, a water-craft; and yet, at the same time, it is something very much more. For above its tapering hull are great, widespread, aeroplane wings. The machine is water-craft and aircraft combined.

Above is seen a great multi-engined "flying yacht," capable not only of the water. In such winged craft explorers and experts upon minerals has, by any method of earth transport,

Rising from the surface of one of the American lakes, and winging its way northward, it will fly hundreds of miles into territories so far unexplored. With a power plant comprising several separate aero-engines, this big "yacht of the air" will be free from any risk of a forced landing through mechanical defects. It will penetrate farther and farther north, alighting when necessary on the surface of one or other of a string of lakes, until it is right up in remote North-West Territory, skirting the Arctic Circle itself.

Right forward in the bow, as the craft whirls through the air at one hundred miles an hour, will be a glass-windowed observation compartment, in which a hunter acquainted with Northern territories will take his place beside the navigator of the machine. Behind this observation chamber is a comfortable day-cabin. Behind that, again, is a roomy sleeping compartment and various store-rooms; while towards the rear of the hull of this air-and-water craft are the quarters for its crew.

Not only are these aerial discoverers to hunt for gold and for far-Northern wealth

which has defied, up till now, the unresting energies of man, but—having located hidden riches in these remote Arctic regions—the experts are to plan the opening up of such new wealth, and its commercial exploitation, by long-range aeroplanes flying regularly over routes impassable for earth transport.

of rushing high through the air, but also of manœuvring on the surface are to penetrate far into remote Northern territories, seeking wealth which defied so far the wit of man.

III.

THE manless flying machine is now no longer a scientific dream. It is becoming a reality. For years science has been striving to perfect a small automatic aeroplane which shall take off from the ground, fly on a predetermined course, and then alight, all without a human hand at its controls.

To-day a wonderful, almost uncanny, success is crowning these efforts. After a costly, fascinating quest, air science has actually produced tiny, secret, pilotless aeroplanes, with a wing span of about twenty feet and driven by motors of sixty horse-power, which do really and truly fly themselves. One of these amazing little machines has, in fact, not only made many ascents and descents, pilotless, but has performed automatic aerial journeys of more than an hour's duration. Manless aeroplanes have "brains," "nerves," and "muscles." They are inhumanly human.

The brain takes the form of a gyroscope, or, rather, two gyroscopes. One balances the 'plane as it flies. The other, acting as a mechanical pilot, maintains it on any given course. Pneumatically-operated valves and tubes—the "nerves" obeying the gyroscopic "brain"—transmit energy to tiny, compressed-air motors. These motors are the "muscles," and actuate the controlling surfaces of the aeroplane.

Its "brain" functioning precisely, one of these little 'planes—capable of carrying a load of two hundred and fifty pounds—is declared by experts who have seen it in flight to maintain a straighter, steadier course than any machine having a human hand at its controls.

Its engine started, the manless 'plane runs a short distance, and then climbs

smoothly, exactly as though a pilot was in charge. Up it ascends, balancing itself perfectly, till it is at a height which those launching it have decided upon beforehand. Then, in a manner which savours of witchcraft to anyone gazing from below, the little machine ceases to ascend and begins to fly out of sight on a level keel.

No greater scientific wizardry has ever been accomplished than the way in which manless aeroplanes are now being made not only to gain any desired height and travel ahead, but also to move a certain distance, turn round, and fly back to the points from which they started.

One portion of the "brain" in the craft is set the task, by means of mechanism delicately sensitive to changes of air pressure, of "measuring" the altitude to which the machine ascends. When the height has been gained which those starting the 'plane have agreed upon, the measurer warns the "brain." This throws into operation a gear which stops the ascent, and sends the 'plane forward on a level course.

How the pilotless machine keeps an account of the distance it has flown is astonishingly clever. A tiny fan, or "windmill," is fitted to one of the wings. This, spinning in the wind-flow, acts as an aerial "log." The log can be set, before the machine starts, to send an impulse to the "brain" after a certain number of air-miles have been flown. Whereupon the gyroscope "brain" operates "nerves" and "muscles," and sets the machine off on some new course. It is possible, by adjustments before the 'plane ascends, to dispatch it for a certain distance in one direction; then to make it turn and fly on some other course; and after that to make back towards the 'drome from which it has started.

French science has now turned to the idea of the automatic piano-player for the direction of the flight of manless air machines. Installed in the 'plane is a small clockwork apparatus operating the controls. This mechanism has a band of paper running through it with small holes punched in it. According to the number and arrangement of these perforations, punched out before the pilotless aeroplane leaves the ground, the whole of its subsequent flight is governed.

Scientists, studying their maps and finding out from meteorologists what are the wind-conditions in the upper air, can punch out on the piano-player roll an aerial itinerary which will take the manless 'plane on, say, a triangular course of so many miles in each direction, the flight finishing up at the point from which the machine started.

Wireless, naturally, plays its part in these new wonders. A manless 'plane can be fitted with an automatic installation which sends out, ceaselessly, while the machine is passing high through the air, wireless signals which, received at ground stations, enable operators to plot out, from moment to moment, where the distant 'plane is in the sky. They can, in fact, following its unseen course mile after mile, transmit to it emergency signals which, overriding the pre-arranged programme on which the machine's "brain" is working, alter its course according to any last-minute plan of those in control.

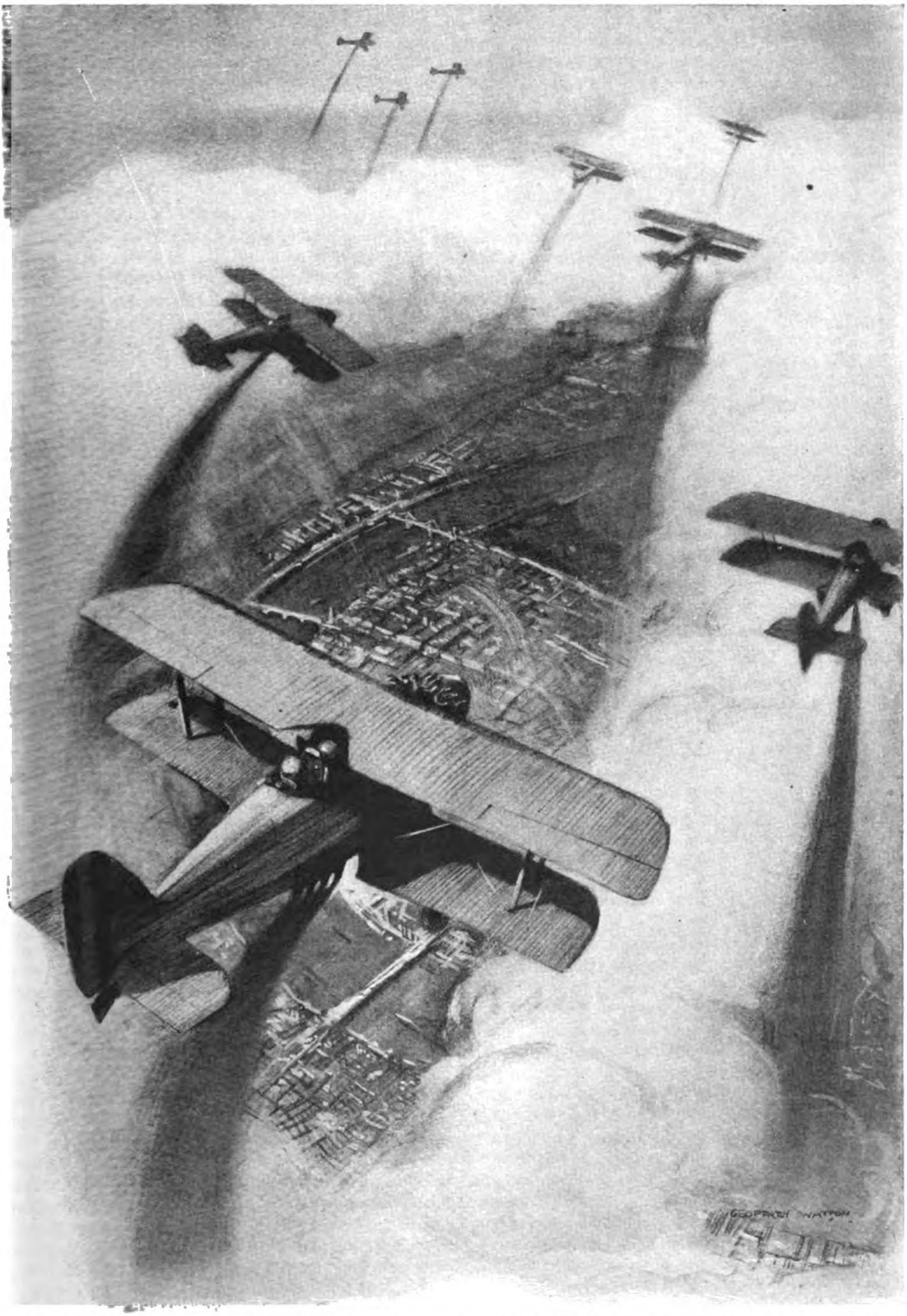
Wireless enters, also, into the way in which a pilotless 'plane can be made to alight just as would a man-driven machine. As the 'plane nears the 'drome, a wireless operator on the ground, by a given signal, stops its motor and causes it to glide earthward. Then, tapping out another signal just before the 'plane reaches the ground, he causes a wire, with a weight on the end of it, to unroll itself from beneath the machine. This weight, touching ground while the 'plane is still some distance up in the air, causes its control-surfaces to set themselves in such a way that the machine makes a smooth, safe contact with the ground.

IV.

WHERE are such new miracles as these now leading us?

To this, for one thing. Science believes that it can embody the wonders of pilotless flying in an amazing form of super-rapid air mail. It is reckoned that it will be possible to employ a sort of "winged cartridge," driven by a powerful motor, and entirely pilotless, which will, under wireless control, rush between Paris and London, with a load of express letters, in a flight lasting not more than an hour! What this will mean to the commercial world, assuming that what is done between London and Paris is accomplished also between other great cities, one need not emphasize, because it will revolutionize business correspondence.

American science, investigating enormously high-speed winds of the upper air, believes that the way is being paved for what should be almost our ultimate marvel. It is calculated that it will be possible so to equip a small, pilotless mail-'plane that it will climb miles high—flying automatically and checked in its course by wireless—until it enters a vast upper air-stream travelling at speeds scarcely dreamt of at earth level. Immersed in this great rushing tide at enormous heights, the pilotless mail-'plane—its own speed augmented by that of the body of air in which it is moving—may annihilate distance at a pace as great as five hundred miles an hour! It will be a winged



Astonishing success has attended recent experiments in dispersing clouds by dropping upon them, from aeroplanes, electrified sand, which causes the moisture in them to evaporate ; and it is now proposed that, by the use of an organized corps of "weather-'planes," we should dissipate fogs from over harbours and big cities.

projectile rather than a flying machine! Such a terrific pace may it attain, in fact, that it will bear urgent mails from New York, right across the wide Atlantic to London, in not more than about eight hours!

V.

ONE of the questions science is now asking, and to which it is beginning to give significant answers, is this :—

"Are we, in these days of wonders, still to be the plaything of every storm which chooses to come rushing in over us, marring great outdoor festivals to which vast numbers of people have been looking forward?"

Only a little time ago, had that question been asked, it would have been answered merely by shakings of heads. To-day, however, following experiments almost fantastically strange, the great men do not shake their heads so regretfully if you ask them whether, say, when Derby Day comes round, or when a football Cup Final is to be watched by keen-eyed thousands, it may not become possible to ensure that, whatever spiteful tricks the weather may be up to elsewhere, it shall at least be fine above that one important spot.

Making your own weather locally? Is not the idea impossible? No, it is not; and for reasons which—based on the results of these latest experiments—I am able to place before you here.

One should explain, to begin with, the idea underlying a series of tests in different localities. Primarily it has been this: Can we, as a first experiment, break up a small, threatening storm which is about to pour down rain on some spot we want to keep dry?

In one phase of this research, now being worked upon, a "storm-fighting" aeroplane goes soaring up in an aerial raid upon clouds which have been espied in the distance. This winged "weather-plane" is armed, not with guns, but with a load of electrified sand!

This sand is just ordinary sand until science charges it with electricity; and when it has been so charged, and is dropped by a high-flying airman on the top of a cloud, the effect is astonishing. The electrified sand acts like magic on the heavy, moisture-laden cloud. It disperses it, in fact, in such an amazingly rapid way that one airman—describing afterwards a "raid" he made on a cloud-bank—says that as he leaned over the side of his machine, looking down upon the cloud-top after he had scattered a load of electrified sand upon it, he saw a great "hole," or vertical tunnel, appear suddenly through the cloud right from top to bottom. Peering down through this hole, which showed where the electrified sand had broken up the cloud-structure into clear air, the pilot could see the far-distant surface of the earth.

What happens is that the highly-electrified sand—sprayed out in the latest apparatus through a series of nozzles beneath the 'plane—"dries up" a big rain-laden cloud almost like you might squeeze a sponge. To those looking up from the earth the result seems magical. One moment, so to say, the threatening cloud is there. The next it has vanished.

IN this country, and on the Continent, attention is now being directed to these new marvels, while in the most recent experiments of which we have information, made from the famous McCook experimental air-station in the United States, cloud-banks thousands of feet in length, and several miles in breadth, and with a depth of as much as fifteen hundred feet, have been assailed by aeroplanes, dropping electric sand, at heights several miles above the surface of the earth. These clouds have been broken up, or torn to shreds, before they could influence adversely the weather in the immediate neighbourhood of the flying-field.

Picture to yourself, now, in the light of this astonishing research, the vast Wembley Stadium on a Cup Final day, or the wide expanse of Epsom Downs on Derby morning. Eyes are turned anxiously upon the sky. Away in the south-west lowering rain-clouds appear, as they so often do. Is yet another great outdoor festival to be ruined?

No! For suddenly there is a drone of engines. A squadron of cloud-fighters rushes up to the attack. Assailed before they can reach Wembley, or the Downs, the rain-clouds are defeated in a silent, widespread "battle," and the great throngs below enjoy with dry clothes and merry hearts their well-earned afternoon of outdoor sport.

Already, in our first experiments at weather control, actual results are being achieved, over quite limited areas, which may be a prelude to the day when, on the occasion of great outdoor holiday and sports, we send up our squadrons of "aerial weather-guards," and leave mackintoshes and umbrellas at home, happy in the knowledge that the evil spirits up aloft have at last met their match in the scientific onslaughts of those who rise to wage war upon them in their own element.

BOBBED HAIR AND SAUSAGES

by

Barry Pain

ILLUSTRATED BY
WILMOT LUNT

THE girl with the bobbed hair ordered a large cup of coffee with milk. Milk, she knew, was a food. Coffee, she had found, tended to lessen the fierceness of her appetite. The roll and butter were a matter of course, for you always had a roll and butter. And her choice of two poached eggs was wise, for a really out-of-date egg cannot be poached.

At one time she had been much more extravagant over her luncheon—and that was when she was earning much less than she earned now. But then for a week she kept a careful account. She found that in extravagance as distinct from necessary and rational expenditure she had in one week spent enough to purchase a moderately good pair of grey suède shoes. Now you do not, if you are a nice girl, wish to feel that you have eaten a moderately good pair of grey suède shoes.

She had learned much wisdom. There was pressed beef, for example. What was it? It was beef that had been cooked slowly and for a long period, until all the goodness had been extracted. You then squared up the residue and gave it two coats of varnish. It had low food-value, and there was not a vitamine in the whole of one brick of it. So you had to eat salad with it, and salad was extra. She did not really know much about vitamines. She always pictured them as looking, under a high-powered microscope, like large brown fleas with tails that curled over their backs. But she did know that without vitamines you were lost. Potatoes had been—and were no longer—a weakness. Chip potatoes had specially appealed to her. They made a sound in your mouth like a gentle sewing-machine. But potatoes were full of starch, and when cooked (as you hoped but did not believe) in butter they became

even more fattening. "Take, oh, take those chips away." She dreaded to become fat. Ices also she had condemned. In one hot summer she must have spent enough on strawberry ices to provide grey suède shoes for a centipede. And then Uncle George—a bad man who sometimes said good things—had told her that nobody with a palate ever ate ices at all, because it was impossible to taste anything that was either too cold or too hot. So now she never even looked at an ice—not even if you added chopped nuts and a chunk of pineapple and two long straws and squirted soda-water over it, and called it by some name out of the American language.

Behold her, then, the girl with the bobbed hair, the science of nutrition, and the elegant economy, seated at a small table in a tea-shop with a young man in grey opposite to her. Bobbed hair suited her to perfection. She was far prettier than some peaches.

AND the young man in grey? He was merely an accident. In our City of London, as indeed in some other places, people will lunch in the luncheon-hour. Such simultaneousness crowds the restaurants and tea-shops. The girl took the seat opposite to the young man because there was no other place vacant.

The young man's hair was a little too long. His eyes were deep-set and thoughtful, lighting up when he chanced to think of something that amused him. His hands were small and well-shaped, the stain on the fingers showing that he smoked many cigarettes. Indeed, his luncheon consisted only of cigarettes and black coffee. His clothes were good, but worn with a careless air. This was really all she noticed, for, as she herself said afterwards, she hardly glanced at the man. But it seemed to her that to lunch on black coffee and cigarettes meant a low morality. Why could he not order a roll and butter like other people?

Suddenly he spoke to her. His voice was musical, his manner was shy and deferential.

"Pardon me," he said, "for asking what must seem to be an impertinent question, but would you tell me why you had your hair cut like that?"

"It is a very impertinent question," she said, coldly. "And I don't know you."

"Nor I you. So there we start from zero. But no doubt I was tactless. Not every woman can grow long hair, and in that case——"

"You are quite wrong. It is nothing to do with you, but before I chose to have it cut my hair was long enough for me to sit on it. And now perhaps you will tell me why you ask such a question."

"Certainly. Because you should warn any women friends of yours. Many are swindled. The price of human hair was never higher than it is to-day, and I have no doubt that you demanded the full value for yours."

"What do you mean? I never got a penny for it. I just left it at the shop where they cut it off."

"Then you left them for nothing material that was worth several pounds. And you are one of the many innocent women victims of the man Trotsky."

"You must be mad. Trotsky can't have anything to do with it."

"Pardon me. He has everything to do with it. Bobbed hair was one of his most brilliant ideas. I could tell you all about it, but no doubt it would not interest you."

He picked up his bill as if about to depart.

"Of course I should like to hear about it. Do go on."

She lit a cigarette—evidence that she would remain for some minutes.

"Well," he said, "you may—or may not—have noticed it, but there is a tendency for any trade to get into the hands of one group. For instance, the milk-trade in this country is mostly in the hands of the Welsh. I don't know why it should be so, but it is so. Some trades belong especially to the Jews. Now the trade of hairdressing for women, not only in this country but all over the world, is in the hands of the anarchists or Bolsheviks. Nobody else is allowed any chance in it."

"My hairdresser," said the girl, "is named Brown. My people have been to him for a long time. He seems quite English. He lives at Surbiton and has got a wife and family."

"Every Boronovsky who comes to this country calls himself Brown. And every Russian can seem English if he pleases. If he can speak Russian, he can speak anything. I myself am Russian, but you would never have guessed it."

"There's no accent," said the girl. "But I did think you looked a little foreign, though Russian did not occur to me."

"Quite so. Well, Trotsky knew the value of the political association of women's hairdressers. Those at the top of the profession are invaluable as spies. They go into the houses of the aristocrats and capitalists. They hear much. At the time of the revolution Trotsky said to the association: 'America will not have us and proud England despises us. Very well, then. The women of those countries shall not only be forced to contribute to our funds, but shall actually pay for contributing. Let there be bobbed hair!'"

He paused dramatically and lit another

cigarette. The girl, leaning towards him, said in a low voice: "Two men at the next table are listening very carefully to you."

"One of them a man with reddish hair?"

"Yes."

"That's all right. They're Scotland Yard, and very good friends of mine. I'm not telling them anything that they don't know already. They're looking after me just at present because there are a fair number of people over here who would like to slip a knife into me. I'm not an anarchist myself, you see, and I know rather too much for their taste. Well, the bobbed hair idea was carried out. They spent money on it, they worked the Press, they bought up the film stars in Italy and in the studios of Los Angeles. And it has paid them. Goodness, how it has paid them! The wharves at Odessa and Nicolaiev and Kherson are simply laden with bales of women's hair. Over a million Russian peasants are employed in sorting it, cleaning it, and grading it according to the exact tint. Russia has cornered the wig market. You cannot buy a wig or a transformation in this country now except at an enormous price, and soon you will not be able to buy it at all. Every day shiploads of this feminine loveliness are crossing the seas from this country and from New York to Trotsky and his friends, and as a rule, as in your case, not one penny has been paid for it. And," he added, significantly, "that's not the whole of the question. There's something far blacker behind it."

The girl, leaning towards him, said in a low voice: "Two men at the next table are listening very carefully to you."

"What's that?" said the girl, breathless.

"It's almost too horrible to tell you. There is, of course, a good deal of waste in the hair which is sent to Russia. Not all of it is of any value in the wig-making industry. This waste is chopped small by machines. As you perhaps know, human hair chopped small and taken internally is a poison. From the assassin's point of view, it is a particularly useful poison, for it leaves no trace. Now Russia is over-

populated. There is not enough food for the people. And there is more than one way of dealing with that. To-day a district is marked out into which the Government sends a big supply of sausages sold at a very cheap price."

"And that sausage contains the chopped hair?"

"Quite so. When there are too many people a good number of them is cleared away like that. It is called an epidemic. And it is not only in sausages that the stuff can be used. It can be put into any article of diet. I have seen *pâté de foie gras* prepared with it when it was necessary to remove quietly and unostentatiously some man of wealth or importance in another country."

The girl glanced at her wrist-watch. "I have to get back to the office," she said. "What you tell me is too terrible." She hesitated, and then held out her hand. "Good-bye," she said.

"Good-bye," he said. "I don't give you my name. I daren't. But you may tell anybody all I have told you if you think it necessary, and you may say that you had it from a Russian in exile."

The girl with the bobbed hair paid her bill at the desk and passed out. The young man in grey ordered more coffee. The two men from the next table joined him, laughing heartily.

"Well, Bill, you've done it," said the red-haired man. "You've won your bet, and here's your money. I don't grudge it. I've spent more at a theatre seeing a farce that was not nearly so well played. But what would you have done if somebody had sat down at that table who was not a girl with bobbed hair?"

"Well," said Bill, "in that case the opening would have been different, but the story would have been the same. As long as I told that yarn to a stranger and the stranger accepted it, I won my bet. The longer I live the more convinced I am that almost anybody will believe almost anything. I nearly believed in those sausages myself while I was talking about them."

And meanwhile the girl with the bobbed hair had a small group of other girls gathered round her in the office, listening with the utmost interest.

"You do have things happen to you," said one young enthusiast, with a slight shade of bitterness. "I never get any Russian exiles—never get anything."

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 139.

(The Third of the Series.)

Cup final, Ascot, Henley, many more,
By all of them are shadows cast before.

1. Monarch who failed to keep the waters back
Gives us within his name a nut to crack.
2. From eight one letter goes, and here we seek
The other five. What ends on this day week?
3. Death stands beside the water, and one may
See the race end here on some future day.
4. Terrible, truly merciless, although
Romantic when connected with a hoe.
5. What breaks but does not fall we do not take.
We need the one that falls but does not break.
6. A dozen take, take it a dozen times;
The doctor will provide a word that rhymes.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 139 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on February 10th.

To every light one alternative answer may be sent: it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 138.

Two well-known English cities here we find.
One metal goods, one cotton, calls to mind.

1. Brush, plant, or carriage—all are like of sound.
2. A land where maid as page to duke is found.
3. Such fate bard wished for cruel English king.
4. And this hath charms—perchance you play or sing.
5. Measure, perhaps; for isle an ancient word.
6. Message or bank, in music 'twill be heard.
7. If this is flesh, then horses flesh may eat.
8. In autumn days we gather ripened wheat.
9. Where art thou, maid? In mirror should we seek.
10. To slay this beast was task of hero Greek.

PENARTH.

1. B	roo	M
2. I	llyri	A
3. R	ui	N
4. M	usi	C
5. I	nc	H
6. N	ot	E
7. G	ras	S
8. H	arves	T
9. A	lic	E
10. M	inotau	R

NOTES.—Light 1. Broom, brougham. 2. Twelfth Night. 3. Gray, The Bard. 9. Alice, where art thou? Lewis Carroll.

"Ibrahim" is admitted for the second light of No. 135.

TWENTY-SEVENTH SERIES: RESULT.

All four acrostics were answered correctly by Mancu and Ombas, who gain prizes of two and a half guineas each. Seven solvers—Anvil, Enos, Lileat, Lobo, Peci, Reg, and Slugo—missed only one light and they will take prizes of one guinea. All these nine winners will be debarred from further success in the twenty-eighth series, now running.

Mancu is Mr. L. A. Jones, Asterley, Goldsmid Road, Tonbridge, Kent; Ombas is Mr. V. H. Samuelson, The Knoll, Berkhamsted, Herts; Anvil is Mr. E. Dance, 45, Cowick Road, Tooting, S.W.; Enos is Mr. W. S. Cool, 10, Whitehall Place, S.W.1; Lileat is Miss L. Eaton, 597, Kingston Road, Raynes Park, S.W.20; Lobo is Mrs. L. Morris, 74, Larch Road, N.W.2; Peci is Mr. G. E. Matthews, 53, Stockwell Green, S.W.9; Reg is Mr. H. Lees, 3, Campden House Chambers, W.8; Slugo is Mr. J. J. Holloway, Lyndale, Howard Road, New Malden, Surrey.

THE HUMOUR OF

RIDGEWELL

AN INTERVIEW WITH A POPULAR LAUGHTER - MAKER.

The Host: "Now before we go in I'd better warn you men. My Gov'nor insisted on dressing up like Father Christmas—so use a little tact."

Reproduced by permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

DRAWINGS bearing the signature "Ridgewell" appear with such regularity in the leading humorous papers of the present time that the work of this artist hardly needs introduction. It is sufficient to observe, in passing, that his sketches—however exaggerated they may be—are almost invariably founded upon true-to-life incidents. Mr. W. L. Ridgewell "holds, as 'twere, the mirror up to Nature"—though, apparently, it is one of those distorting mirrors which enable us to find laughter in the reflections of things at which we have never previously had cause even to smile.

Conscientious Plumber (who has tried hard to remember everything): "Blimey, after all I shall 'ave ter go back fer me fags!"

By permission of "The Humorist."

It has been said that a humorist may always be expected to do the unexpected—which paradox may account for the misleading episode which marked the commencement of Ridgewell's artistic career.

During a history lesson at the Brighton Grammar School some years ago, young Ridgewell was caught in the act of scribbling in an exercise book, and was promptly hauled up for punishment. Contrary to the expectations of the master (and, possibly, of the reader), the scribbling was not a comical caricature of the type so beloved of naughty schoolboys, but a perfectly straightforward attempt at serious art. Indeed, the work revealed such merit that the master let the boy off with a caution and

Bright Old Lady (frightfully bucked with the Spring): "Jobson, I wonder if we might indulge in a little trot?"

By permission of "The Humorist."

told him that so long as he pursued his art studies under more favourable conditions he might some day become an Academician. Truly a strange beginning for one who was destined to find fame as one of our leading pictorial humorists!

How far Ridgewell would have climbed had he confined his attentions to serious art it is impossible to say, but, as the accompanying selections from his work confirm, the fact that his sense of humour has now obtained ascendancy over his other gifts is no matter for regret.

I asked the artist himself to explain how the change came about.

"I cannot recollect any actual turning-point in my career," he said. "The fact is, I just drifted into humorous work. In my very young days I took myself extremely seriously. Indeed, most of my early efforts were of a somewhat gruesome nature—pictures of pathetic-looking gentlemen getting themselves hanged, or soldiers receiving perfectly dreadful wounds on the battlefield. I remember, too, that I was particularly fond of drawing skeletons!

"On leaving school I was sent by my father (who, by the way, was a clever amateur illuminator) to serve an apprenticeship to a firm of engravers, where I learned seal engraving, heraldic art, and lithographic drawing. In my spare time I attended the life class at

Park Player: "Yes, he's quite a nice chap to play with. So gentlemanly—always takes his braces off."

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"Don't sing, George; I'm feeling so delightfully drowsy."

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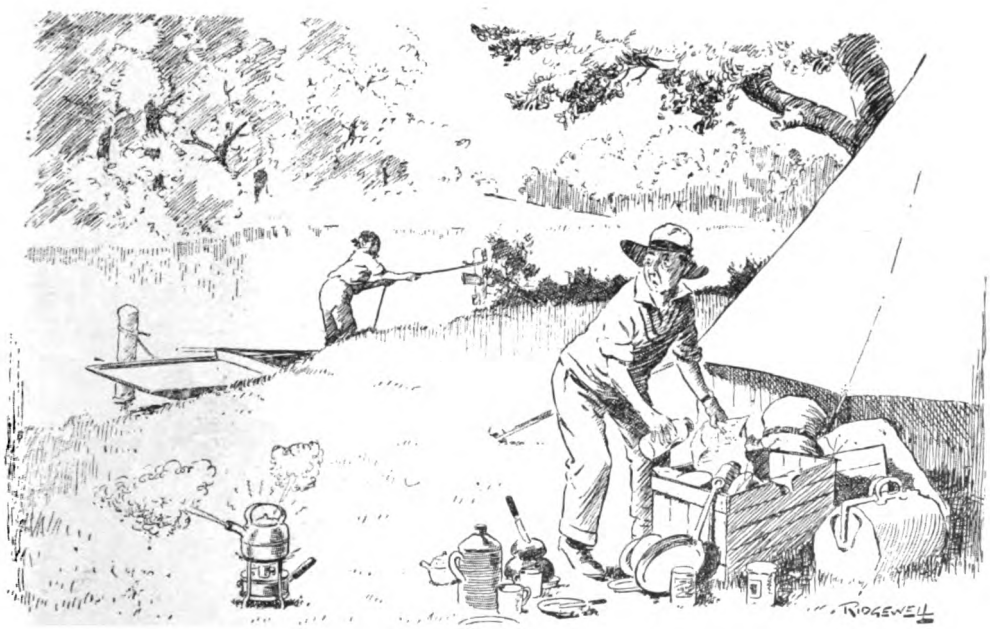

1st Camper (unpacking): "Where did you pack the butter, old thing?"
2nd Camper (in punt): "In the kettle, old bean."

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Voice from 2LO: "One, begin with left foot, and step directly forward. Two, step diagonally forward to right, weight on right foot. Three, draw left foot up to right, dip," etc., etc.

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the Brighton School of Art, and also took one of those correspondence courses in black-and-white work with a view to becoming an illustrator.

"The only humorous drawings I did as a youngster were made entirely for my own amusement. One day, however, I happened to show a set of six little alleged comic sketches to a friend, and he promptly advised me to submit them to a firm of postcard publishers. To my surprise and delight, they were accepted and paid for at the rate of four shillings each—which seemed a pretty handsome sum to a youth of seventeen.

"From the engravers I went to a commercial studio, and later started on my own as a free-lance artist—doing advertising pictures, posters, and all kinds of hack work, and managing to earn just enough to keep me going. Occasionally, in my spare time, I would turn out one or two humorous drawings, but more often than not those efforts came back with the usual formal 'regrets.'

"Then the war came, and within a few months I found myself on service in India. Sketching now became a hobby instead of a business. Freed from the necessity of selling everything I turned out, I applied my pencil to lighter subjects, and what little spare time I had at my disposal was devoted to making caricatures of Army life, native types, and so on, for the amusement of my comrades.

"Presently I began to receive commissions for cartoons and sketches for various Indian publications—principally *Indian Ink* and a magazine

Hostess (a great collector of pet animals): "Major! For the third time—do you take sugar?"

By permission of "The Humorist."

called *The Looker-On*. Shortly after this I was put on a staff job, to teach lithography to Sepoys. Then the committee of the Indian War Loan applied for me, and I went down to Calcutta to do posters for War Loan and Recruiting propaganda, still continuing with the lighter style of work in my spare time.

"After five years of mixed 'arting' and soldiering I came home, and found, to my delight, that the Army experiences had apparently broadened my outlook and developed my sense of humour. I had, so to speak, got into the habit of thinking humorously, and ideas came so much more readily than they had done before that I was now able to confine my attention almost entirely to drawing for the humorous papers."

"How do you get most of your ideas?" I asked.

"I have no definite method," Mr. Ridgewell replied. "I suppose I am always subconsciously on the look-out for them. A chance remark, a paragraph in the newspaper, or something I see in the street will start a certain train of thought, and then suddenly the idea arrives. Out come a stump of pencil and any piece of paper I happen to have in my pocket, and I jot down a few words as a reminder.

"I find that humorous notions are very elusive, and if I don't capture them in this way they nearly always give me the slip. Even when I get them, as it were, under lock and key, they sometimes escape—for on more than one occasion I have taken out my hastily-scrawled notes only to find that I could not read my own writing! Sometimes my mind seems as blank as the sheet of paper on my easel, and I just sit and stare and think. By this

Window Cleaner: "Very sorry, mum, but me being short-sighted and a bit deaf, before I knew wot 'ad 'appened I'd 'alf cleaned the drawing-room window with 'im."

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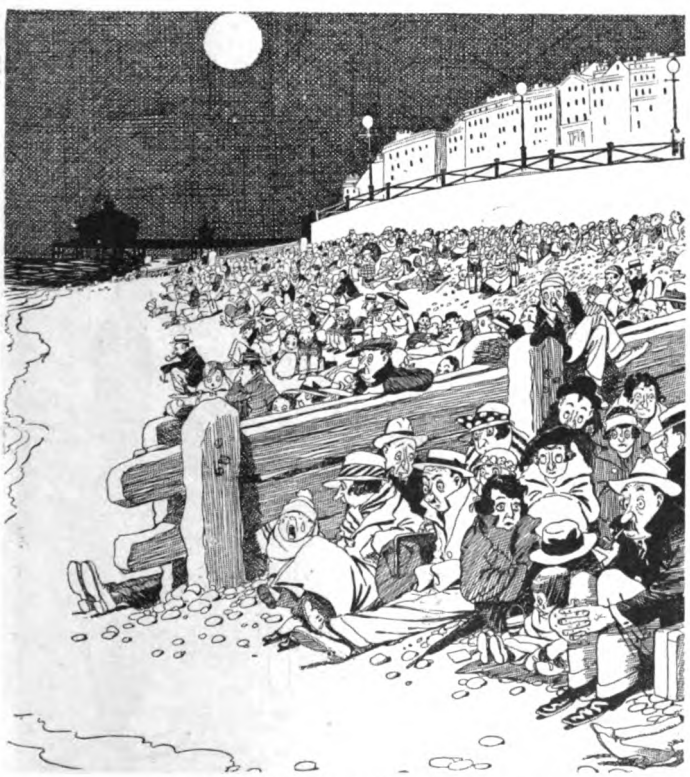

OUR POPULAR SEASIDE RESORTS.

"Last night 3,000 people slept on the beach."

By permission of "London Opinion."

Long-suffering Householder: "Well, how are you getting on?"
Plumber's Mate: "Fine! Two winners."

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I am at work, and most other times as well. Directly I start to think I have to light up; and as my pipe is constantly going out, I use a tremendous number of matches. The manufacturers ought to make me a reduction. I hate to be disturbed when I am trying to get an idea, but once the theme of a drawing is settled I can stand any amount of noise or interruption.

"It is difficult to say what kind of situation appeals

process I occasionally manage to 'sweat out' an idea—but more often than not I have to give it up as a bad job and go out for a breath of fresh air.

"Several of my friends bring me suggestions for humorous drawings—the majority of which, I fear, are not usable. Still, I always encourage them, because their funny notions frequently set up a train of thought which results in a 'winner.' Besides—bless 'em—they mean so well.

"I find that my wife, who has a keen sense of humour, is awfully useful to try ideas on. According to whether my suggestions are met with a sniff, a smile, or a snigger I can categorize them as good, bad, or indifferent. By the way, Mrs. Ridgewell tells me that I make the most weird and awful faces when I am drawing. I take it that I am unconsciously acting the expression I am trying to portray.

"I smoke all the time

LIFE'S UNRECOGNIZED HEROES.
The eldest daughter's young man meets her people.
By permission of "London Opinion."

to me most, but I certainly prefer the subject in which the drawing and the 'joke' stand or fall together—that is to say, in which the caption would be practically meaningless without the picture. That, of course, is a preference which cannot always be followed.

"Oh, yes, I derive a great deal of pleasure from my work. I must admit that when I am developing an idea that particularly appeals to me I sometimes find myself chuckling inwardly. On the other hand, being funny can sometimes become real hard work. There are times when one feels off colour, but the Press waits for no man—and I have sometimes had to turn out a humorous sketch when I have felt more like going into a corner and having a nice, quiet cry. Again, there is a serious side to any kind of humorous art, for even a funny drawing requires a certain amount of technique.

Big-Game Hunter (returning to London after some years spent in quest of the larger carnivora) responds to the call of instinct!

By permission of "The Humorist."

WILL HE NEED IT?

"Don't be so impatient, Harold, I sha'n't be a minute. I'm just making a nice wreath."

By permission of "London Opinion."

I don't consider myself a very artistic person, and I find that if I worry too much over the finer points of draughtsmanship I am apt to lose the essential touch of spontaneity. Yet I have quite often drawn a picture several times before I have been satisfied with it.

"My hobbies? Boating (on the sea), tennis, watching football matches, and trying to play golf. I am not at all brilliant at the Royal and Ancient game—I find that the almost religious fervour of the golfing enthusiast puts me off my stroke. I am much happier rollicking round with a battered re-paint whilst the 'plus four' people are at lunch. It is so much more pleasant for us all!

"Oh—I have one other hobby! I sometimes do a little water-colour painting, or some other form of serious work, for my own amusement. So, you see, in artistic matters the tables have been completely turned. What was once my hobby is now my business—and what was then my business is now my hobby."

"Hi!" Kingston called out. "Come over and sit with us."

THE DISCOVERIES

By

DENIS MACKAIL

"JUST a moment," said Kingston, interrupting the amusing little story that I was telling him; "but you see that fellow over there?"

"No," I said. "Which fellow?"

"That tall one—talking to the cashier. Now he's looking this way. Oh, you *must* see the fellow I mean."

"Do you mean the fellow with jaundice?" I asked.

"That isn't jaundice," said Kingston. "It's sunburn. He's just got back from Buz. Shall I ask him to join us?"

"Got back from where?" I inquired. But Kingston was already on his feet, waving his hand excitedly.

"Most interesting fellow," he informed me, in a loud aside. "Made the most wonderful discoveries. I'll get him to tell us about them." And then he started waving his hand again and snapping his fingers. "Hi!" he called out. "Come over and sit with us."

The sunburnt stranger picked up these signals—in common with the other lunchers in the club coffee-room—and obligingly deflected his course in our direction.

"Hullo, Kingston!" he said. "What's the matter?"

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AT BUZ

ILLUSTRATED BY TREYER EVANS

"Come and join us," said Kingston, catching him by the arm. "I've got a man here"—and he glanced at me—"who's awfully keen to hear all you've been doing. At Buz, you know."

This gross misstatement seemed to remove my last opportunity of asking in what quarter of the world Buz was situated, and whether it was the name of a town, mountain, desert, river, or sea. However, I did my best to observe the tradition of good manners expected from members of the Caviare, and rose gracefully to my feet.

"Glad to meet you," said the stranger.

"Delighted," I murmured in reply.

We shook hands cordially, and in my own case rather painfully, for the stranger had a grip of steel. I looked back at Kingston, hoping that he would now favour me with his acquaintance's name, but he was beckoning to a waiter.

"Bring another chair," he said. "What? Yes, this gentleman is joining us."

I saw the new arrival staring at the remains of my stewed fruit.

"But I say," he protested. "You've finished, haven't you?"

"No, no," answered Kingston, cheerily. "Nothing of the sort. Besides, we want to hear what you've been doing." He appealed to me. "We've got oceans of time, haven't we?" he said.

I saw that the tradition of good manners would involve my catching a later train down to the country, and hastened to agree.

"Yes, yes," I said, pleasantly. "Of course we have."

"That's right," added Kingston. "Now sit down, and we'll hear all you've got to tell us." We sat down, and he leaned confidentially in my direction. "This fellow," he said, "has been in charge of all the operations at Buz—right from the beginning."

"Have you really?" I asked, turning to the stranger.

"Well, no," he said. "I've *been* there from the beginning; but I only took over from Canford quite recently."

"But we all know," put in Kingston, "who was really running things. Eh?" And he winked at me—so meaningly that I wouldn't like to swear that I didn't wink back.

"Yes," he added. "Our friend here is like a lot of these scientific men. He doesn't mind who gets the credit as long as he does the work. But we see through all that, don't we?"

"No, really," expostulated the stranger. "I've been very lucky in having such an interesting job. That's the only way I look at it."

Kingston winked at me again. "Fine fellow!" he seemed to be saying. And aloud he added: "Well, *we're* very lucky to be hearing about it all at first hand."

What he obviously meant to imply was that *I* was very lucky. But though I was still full of hope for the future, it was difficult to pretend that so far I had heard anything at all. However, I looked as intelligent as I could, while the stranger ordered his lunch.

"I expect," said Kingston, "that this is a bit of a change from the kind of food you had at Buz, eh? Not much luxury there, I shouldn't say."

"Oh, we didn't do so badly," said the stranger. "Perhaps you'd hardly call it luxury, but then——"

"Just think of it," interrupted Kingston, turning to me. "Miles away from everywhere. In camp out there in the wilds. Working all day on these marvellous discoveries. You read his book, of course, didn't you?"

I like to think that I didn't tell a downright lie here. But I am afraid it is a fact that I nodded.

"Just imagine it," continued Kingston, with his eyes flashing. "That little band of devoted workers—voluntary exiles, you might almost call them. No comforts, no recreations——"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," broke in the stranger. "We were comfortable enough, you know. And there was plenty of shooting. A bit rough, perhaps, but none the worse for that."

"By Jove!" said Kingston, quite undaunted. "It makes me proud of my countrymen when I think of all you did out there. Doesn't it make you proud, too?" he asked me.

"Rather!" I said, with a wonderful air of enthusiasm. What else could I possibly say?

Kingston shook his head as though his heart were too full for words; but it wasn't really, for he began speaking again at once.

"And now, my dear fellow," he said, swinging back on the stranger, "we want to hear all about your very latest discoveries. And don't you try to palm us off with anything vague. It's the details we want, you know. It isn't every day that we get the chance of listening to a fellow like you."

I looked more intelligent than ever, as the stranger laid down his fork and drew a deep breath.

"Well——" he began.

"OH, just a minute," said Kingston, breaking in. "Wouldn't it be a help if I sent to the library for a map?"

It would have been of the very greatest assistance to me, but the stranger seemed to think otherwise.

"No, no," he said. "You all know where Buz is. Besides, the map would only show you the general outline."

"Quite right," said Kingston, looking at me as though it had been my suggestion. "Go ahead, old chap. Oh——!"

And here, to my surprise, he suddenly began to laugh.

"I can't help thinking," he said, speaking with difficulty through his chuckles, "of that story in your book about—*you* know the one I mean—about the time that you—I mean, when you were all—— Yes," he concluded, as the stranger also began to smile. "That's the one."

I knew what was coming next, but there seemed no means of avoiding it. Kingston turned to me.

"*You* remember it, don't you?" he said.

I struggled valiantly to obey my conscience.

"Well——" I temporized. "I'm not quite sure which——"

"Oh, come, come," said Kingston. "Of *course* you remember it."

My conscience collapsed. It had never really been given a chance.

"Ah!" I said. "Yes—of course."

"But look here," continued Kingston, with sudden seriousness; "we mustn't keep chipping in like this. We want to hear about these discoveries. By Jove! it's pretty wonderful to think of all those things lying buried there like that for thousands of years—a whole civilization that we'd scarcely dreamt of—complete in every way. Houses, tables, chairs—everything. Even baths, eh?"

"Yes," said the stranger. "At least——"

"To think," Kingston went on, "of all those lives being lived there, almost before the memory of man. Human beings like us—millions of 'em; working, playing, sitting down to their meals, sleeping, eating——"

He paused with a loud sigh before the vision which he had conjured up. It seemed a pretty tame sort of existence to me, but, of course, I didn't say so. I gave a little sigh of my own.

"Wonderful," I said.

Kingston's imagination embarked on a further flight.

"It's just as if," he said, "we were all sitting here, and the whole place were gradually silted up with sand, or mud, or lava, or whatever you like; and some fellow came along after thousands of years and dug it all up, and——"

Here the force of his imagination seemed to overcome him, and he heaved another loud sigh. I couldn't help thinking that

if the whole place *were* being gradually silted up like that, it would be very unlikely that any of us would go on sitting there; and it also struck me that anyone who took the trouble to dig Kingston up after thousands of years would be indulging in the most inexcusable waste of time. I hoped sincerely that my new acquaintance had found something more entertaining in the ruins of Buz, and this last reflection gave me an idea.

"What," I asked him—frowning slightly, so as to show that it was no mere idle curiosity—"what was the most interesting thing that you came across during your—your excavations?"

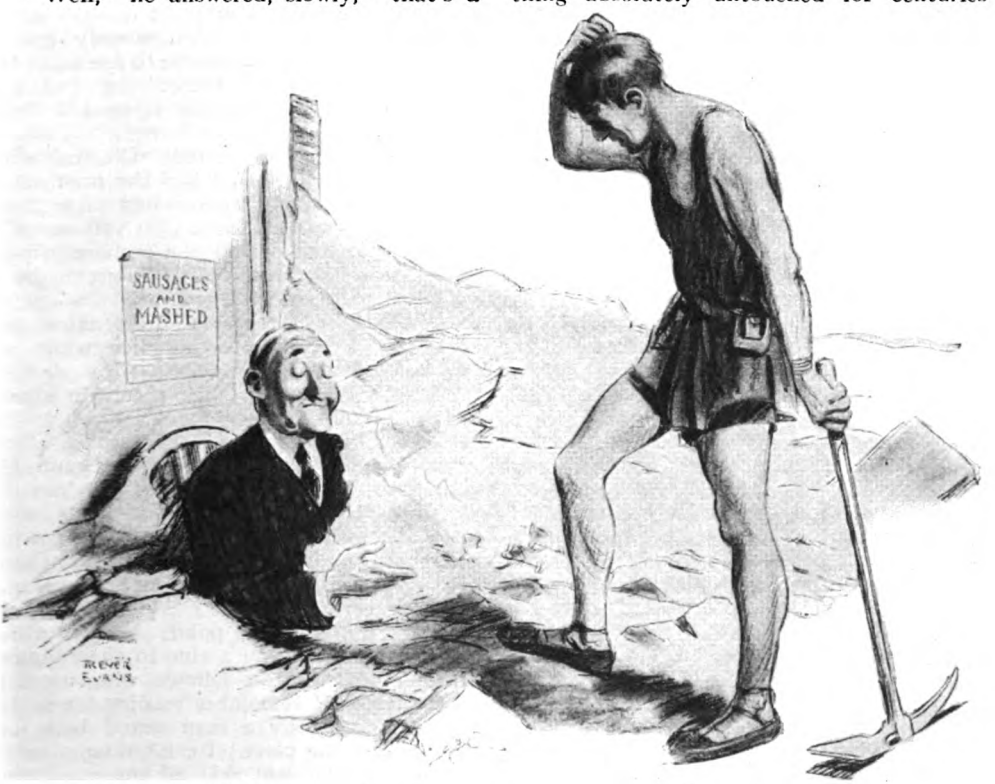
"Well," he answered, slowly, "that's a difficult matter to decide." He gave a little preparatory cough; and I was just leaning back with a feeling of pleasure at having put so intelligent an inquiry, and of anticipation at the reply which it would evoke, when Kingston started off again.

"Oh," he said, "surely there's no difficulty there. It would be the—the—— Dash it, I've forgotten what it's called now. But *you* know what I mean. That place where all those——" He looked appealingly at me, but I couldn't help him, and I wouldn't have helped him if I could. Unfortunately, the obstacle proved insufficient to stop him.

"Never mind the name," he said, heartily. "But, by Jove, I shall never forget the description of it in your book. All those pillars and doors and things. Just think of all those fellows—millions of years ago—hewing a great place like that out of the solid rock. Marvellous!"

Rocks, so far as my own experience went, generally were solid. I thought of pointing this out, but Kingston got in again first.

"Just imagine it," he rushed on. "Everything absolutely untouched for centuries and centuries, and everything exactly the same as it was all those ages ago. Incredible!"



"It's just as if," Kingston said, "we were all sitting here, and the whole place were gradually silted up with sand; and some fellow came along after thousands of years and dug it all up, and ——"

Why? What else did he expect? I opened my mouth to expose the fallacy underlying this observation, but Kingston cut me short at once.

"Look here, old man," he said, "you really must give us a chance to listen. These discoveries are far and away the biggest thing that's been done for years and

years. And when we get an opportunity of hearing about them like this—absolutely first-hand information—well, dash it——" He shook his head at me reproachfully, and it is quite conceivable that I might have apologized, if he had not immediately turned back to the stranger.

"You mustn't mind him," he said, pointing at me with his coffee spoon. "He's really just as interested as any of us. Now, do go ahead and tell us what you've been doing since you took over from old What's-his-name. Are you still having trouble with the natives?"

"Well," answered the stranger, "I should hardly——"

"You know," interrupted Kingston, addressing me once more, "those fellows out there absolutely carry their lives in their hands. Just think of it! A little group of white men, miles away from anywhere, entirely cut off from everything. Terrific!"

"Oh, it's scarcely as bad as that," said the stranger. "The steamer comes up there twice a week now, you know."

"I dare say," said Kingston. "But that wouldn't be much help if the natives chose to turn ugly. Why, I remember when I was doing that motoring tour in Algeria we had no end of a scare once. If the fellow I was with hadn't known a bit of the language—well, I don't suppose I should be sitting here now. As it was, it was all right, because they turned out to be native troops—very decent fellows, too. But it just shows you the kind of risks you're running all the time when you're stuck out at a place like Buz. Takes a bit of nerve, *I* can tell you. You remember those photographs in his book, don't you?"

"Rather," I said, hoping that I might be forgiven.

"Great waste spaces," said Kingston. "Vast deserted tracts. A few trees here and there. A few pools of brackish water. And in the middle of it all this wonderful ancient city. Caravans passing by it for thousands of years without a notion of the buried history under their feet. And then, at last, these fellows come stumbling on it by pure chance, and——"

"No," interrupted the stranger. 'I don't think you can quite say that. After all, Canford and I knew all along that the place was there. It was only a question of getting the Government to——"

"Yes, yes," said Kingston. "But don't tell me that the Government or anyone else knew the exact site. Why," he added, drawing me in again with a glistening eye, "you remember that frontispiece to his book. Just a distant range of mountains. Not a trace of all the treasures which were hidden away. Tremendous!"

IT now seemed to me that I had acquired enough indirect knowledge of local conditions at Buz to venture a second question.

"It's pretty hot out there, I suppose?" I suggested. "Pretty warm, eh?"

"Warm?" shouted Kingston. "Hot? You've no idea what it's like. Why, I thought it pretty hot that time I was telling you about—when I was motoring about in Algeria. But that's nothing to the ordinary temperature at Buz. Is it?" he demanded.

"Well," said the stranger, "there's a pretty cold wind blowing most of the time. It's not a bad climate when you're used to it."

"Ah, yes," Kingston agreed. "*When* you're used to it. But that doesn't affect what I was saying. You've only got to look at your face, old fellow, to see what the sun must be like out there."

I thought the stranger seemed a little embarrassed.

"My face?" he repeated. "Oh, that's not the sun. The fact is, I had the misfortune to go down with jaundice just after I got back. I suppose I do look a bit yellow still."

If I had hoped that the embarrassment would now be transferred to Kingston, I was doomed to disappointment.

"What did I tell you?" he asked me. "Didn't I say it was jaundice when we first saw him come in?"

"No," I retorted, with a certain sharpness. "You said——"

"Well," interrupted Kingston, airily, "it doesn't affect my point about the climate. Besides," he added, "it's not the climate that we're discussing. It's these new discoveries. We want to hear what progress has been made, don't we? Now, for instance, have you come on any evidence of literature out there? That would be quite an interesting point. Or anything that would give you a clue to the religious beliefs of the—the fellows who used to live there? I remember reading an article quite recently by a man who'd been out at—well, some place; I can't remember its name—and he said that all these different religions were really part of the same religion. I can't quite explain how he proved it, but he certainly made out a very convincing case. Now, how would that work in with your theories about Buz?"

"I don't think I recall the article," said the stranger. "But——"

"Don't you?" said Kingston. "Well, I often think it's true enough that onlookers see most of the game. I'll give you an illustration, if you like. I think it ought to interest you. You know my garden down in the country, don't you?"

"I don't think I've ever——"

"Well, *you* know it, anyhow," said

Kingston, turning back again to me. "And you remember that pond down at the bottom. No, not the stream. The pond. Well, as I was saying, I had a fellow down from London to advise me about the water-supply for some of my cottages. 'I want you to run a pipe from the pond,' I said. Well, you know what these fellows are like. He made every kind of objection; said the water wasn't pure; said the pipe would get blocked up; all that sort of thing. 'Very well,' I said. 'You can go back to London and I'll do it myself.' I had a couple of men and a boy up from the village, and the whole job didn't take a fortnight. And I tell you," added Kingston, impressively, "that when typhoid broke out in those cottages the tenants themselves said they didn't know what they'd have done without the water-supply. It made all the difference, they said. And yet, if you'll believe me, the parson and the doctor went and routed out some wretched by-law and managed to get the whole supply cut off. What do you make of that?"

I was still puzzling over the application of this story—which is, indeed, very far from clear—when Kingston once again herded us back to the main subject.

"That reminds me," he said. "How do you suppose they managed for water at Buz?"

"Oh," replied the long-suffering stranger, "there are plenty of springs there, you know."

"Surely not," said Kingston. "I always understood that it was practically a desert. And yet," he admitted, "I suppose they must have drawn their water from somewhere. Perhaps there was a river there in those days."

"I don't think so," said the stranger, politely.

"Well," said Kingston, "I should bear the suggestion in mind, if I were you. It might explain a whole lot of things if you came on traces of a river. There must have been trade, you know. And if you want trade, you need ships. That's what I'm always trying to drive into the heads of these business men. 'Build enough ships,' I say, 'and the trade will follow automatically.' It stands to reason."

"But they wouldn't have needed a river at Buz," the stranger pointed out. "It's practically on the edge of the sea."

"Is it?" asked Kingston, with some surprise. "Are you sure?"

I made another incursion into the dialogue.

"Don't you remember," I said, "that the steamer comes there twice a week?"

"Yes, of course," said Kingston. "But I'm talking about Buz as it was in the past. They wouldn't have had any steamers there then."

I gave him up in despair.

"They might have had galleys, though," he suddenly added, just as if this put everyone in the wrong. "Or feluccas, or dahabeeyahs, or something of that sort. I'll bet they had *something*," he concluded, with obstinate insistence.

"Oh, undoubtedly," agreed the stranger. "Canford always said, and I agree with him, that the very situation of Buz argues that its inhabitants were——"

"Buz," broke in Kingston, loudly. "Now, here's a point that occurs to me. I wonder if it has ever occurred to you? How do we know that the place *is* called 'Buz'? What I mean is, if it had absolutely disappeared from sight for all those centuries, why should it have any name at all? You see what I'm getting at, don't you?"

FOR the first time it struck me that the stranger's patience might be wearing a little thin.

"If you had studied my book on the subject——" he began.

"Studied it?" interrupted Kingston. "My dear fellow, I should think I knew as much about that book as any man in England. I remember saying to my wife, when I first saw your name in the advertisements, 'Hullo,' I said, 'we must get hold of this book.' She was a bit surprised at my taking up a subject like that, but of course she quite understood when I told her you were a member of the club. Why, she even read some of it herself. We got quite keen on it, down there in the country; we must have had it out of the library the best part of a fortnight."

Here Kingston beamed on his distinguished acquaintance in an insufferable manner, and then suddenly slapped the table-cloth.

"By Jove!" he said. "I'm glad you reminded me. Now, this *will* interest you. I can't think how it slipped my memory, because really, you know, it was quite a coincidence. You remember that bit of field just beyond my kitchen garden? What? Oh, no; I keep on forgetting you've never been there. Well, anyway, I was having some fruit trees put in—apples mostly, because they do pretty well in that part of the country. You've heard of our cider, I expect. Well, as I was saying, the gardeners were digging a lot of round holes—for these fruit frees that I'm telling you about—and I was down there one morning, with my dog, when all of a sudden my under-gardener's spade came up against something hard. It was a bit of luck that I was there myself, because you know what these

fellows are like—never think of telling you anything. And what do you think it turned out to be ? "

As he chose to look at me at this moment, I very kindly and foolishly said that I didn't know.

" Well," said Kingston, " it was all this talk about Buz that brought it back into my mind. Excavations, you know, and so forth. Of course, I don't say we'd been actually looking for it, because, as I've already told you, we were only getting ready to plant out those apple trees. But in any case, there it was. A bit of old brick-work. ' Well,' I said to myself, ' I may be wrong, of course,' though, mind you, I was pretty sure that I wasn't. ' I *may* be wrong,' I said, ' but I believe that stuff's Roman.' You know we've got a tumulus about half a mile from our front door ? "

" Yes," I said. " I've heard you mentioning it. But I thought you said it was prehistoric."

" That's not the point," Kingston explained. " Everyone knows that the Romans were in my part of the country. Why, there's a hill only a couple of miles from my place that's still called ' Cæsar's Camp.' Not that there's anything to see when you get there, but still they wouldn't have called it that if they hadn't had some reason. And then they've got a whole collection of flint instruments in the county museum, and quite a lot of them were picked up in my neighbourhood."

" But," said the stranger, " the Romans wouldn't have used flint instruments."

" Of course not," Kingston agreed. " But I'm not talking about them. I'm telling you about this bit of old brick-work."

" I beg your pardon," said the stranger. " Then was the brick-work Roman ? "

" Well," replied Kingston, " personally I am convinced of it. But the curious thing was that there was only this one little bit —just about the size of that Stilton over there. I made my fellows dig about in all directions, but we couldn't come on any more. So I made up my mind I'd take it up to London the next time I went, and get some expert to confirm my opinion."

" And what did the expert say ? " asked the stranger.

" Well," said Kingston, " unfortunately, I had a good deal of hand-baggage that day —I was taking up a lot of odds and ends that I'd be needing here in London—and as far as I can make out, I must have left the piece of Roman brick-work in the train. I made a lot of inquiries afterwards, but, of course, it didn't look very valuable, and I'm afraid whoever found it must have thrown it away. Quite an interesting little discovery, though, wasn't it ? "

I LIKE to recall that this inquiry was met with the silence which it deserved. It affords me less pleasure to add that the silence gave Kingston the opportunity to go on talking.

" But I'm afraid we're all rather wandering from the point," he resumed. " Of course, I knew you'd appreciate anything of that nature, and that's why I told you about it ; but let's get back to Buz. Now, here's something I've been meaning to ask you. Supposing—for the sake of argument —you were beginning your work out there all over again, would it be easier or more difficult if, say for example, you were to tackle the job as you did before ? Or let me put it in this way. If you had known at the outset everything that we all know now, would you have attached more or less importance to such knowledge than in the circumstances as they actually are ? You see what I'm driving at, don't you ? "

" Well," said the stranger, " I'm afraid —I mean, I'm not quite clear that I do."

Kingston's immediate answer was to take up a pepper-castor, a fork, and a fragment of toast, and to arrange them carefully on the table.

" Now, this is what I mean," he continued. " This fork represents the mainland. All this part over here is sea. Just a minute, now ; don't hustle me. And this bit of toast is, as I take it, Buz. Now, then——"

" Wait a moment," said the stranger, tilting his head on one side and screwing up his eyes. " Which are the points of the compass ? "

" Eh ? " said Kingston.

" I mean, which is North ? "

" Oh," said Kingston, " Well——"

And he actually had the impertinence to look at me. I shook my head cautiously.

" Yes," I said. " There's Buz, all right. But which is North and which is South ? "

" Well," answered Kingston, " which way does the club face ? "

" East," said the stranger. " Practically due East."

Kingston immediately turned the fork at right angles to its original position.

" Very well," he said. " *Now* is it clear ? "

" No," I pointed out. " You've gone and put Buz in the middle of the sea now."

" No, I haven't," said Kingston. " Buz is this pepper-pot." And he picked it up and held it out for us to examine.

" Then what's the toast ? " I asked.

" I do wish," said Kingston, " that you wouldn't keep butting in like this. I'm taking a lot of trouble to explain my theory to you, but you've done nothing but chip in with interruptions ever since we started. You don't seem to realize that

He slammed the pepper-pot down on the table-cloth and the top came off.

our friend here is a very busy and well-known man, and that you're having an opportunity of hearing all about his discoveries which hundreds of fellows would give their eyes for. How on earth can he tell us what he's been doing if you will keep on asking so many questions? Now, once and for all, this pepper-pot is Buz!"

He slammed it down on the table-cloth and the top came off.

The contents were distributed with the utmost justice and impartiality in the eyes and noses of the three occupants of the table. I cannot speak for Kingston or his scientific friend, for I have not met either of them since this occasion, and, honestly, I can't say that I mind. But I know that in my own case I suffered extreme agony, that large portions of my past life came before me, that I left the coffee-room with my eyes shut and my handkerchief pressed to my face, and that I did not fully recover consciousness until I had received first-aid treatment from the page-boy who looks after the wash-basins downstairs. As far as my memory serves, neither Kingston nor his acquaintance joined me there, and I can only suppose that their cases were dealt with nearer the scene of the accident. I sincerely hope that their sufferings—and most particularly Kingston's—were as acute as my own. If the contrary should ever prove to have been the case, it would gravely affect my belief in a just and all-wise Providence.

In these circumstances I regret that I cannot provide any further information as to the latest discoveries at Buz. It would doubtless be a comparatively simple matter to ascertain the archæological stranger's name and to provide myself with a copy of his book. But, however it may have arisen, I feel a curious distaste for the whole subject. I cannot believe that any really useful purpose is served by disturbing these relics of a vanished civilization, or by bringing to light that which the sand (or mud, or lava) has so mercifully chosen to conceal. I may be prejudiced. But at least I know my own mind.

It has occurred to me sometimes that if I had—in the earlier stages of our symposium—paid a stricter regard to the truth, then—— But no. This is weakness. Please let it be understood that I have, definitely and irrevocably, finished with Buz.

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

733.—SWASTIKA MAGIC SQUARE.

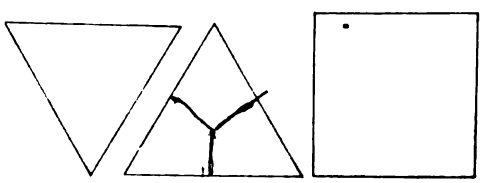
A CORRESPONDENT sends me this little curiosity. It is a magic square, the rows, columns, and two diagonals all adding up 65, and all the prime numbers that occur between 1 and 25 (viz., 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 19, 23) are to be found within the swastika except 11. This number, he says, "in occult lore is ominous and is associated with the eleven Curses of Ebal, so it is just as well it does not come into this potent charm of good fortune." He is clearly under the impression that 11 cannot be got into the swastika with the other primes. But in this he is wrong, and the reader may like to try to reconstruct the square so that the swastika contains all the ten prime numbers and yet forms a correct magic square, for it is quite possible.

24	3	17	11	10
12	6	25	4	18
5	19	13	7	21
8	22	1	20	14
16	15	9	23	2

734.—A LEGACY PUZZLE.

MRS. GOODHEART, a short time ago, gave birth to twins. The clock showed clearly that Tommy was born about an hour later than Freddy. Mr. Goodheart, who died a few months earlier, had made a will leaving £8,400, and had taken the precaution to provide for the possibility of there being twins. In such a case the money was to be divided in the following proportions: two-thirds to the widow, one-fifth to the first born, one-tenth to the other twin, and one-twelfth to his brother. Now, what is the exact amount that should be settled on Freddy?

735.—TRIANGLES AND SQUARE.



CAN you cut each of the equilateral triangles into three pieces so that the six pieces will fit together and form a perfect square?

736.—A PUZZLE WITH CARDS

TAKE from the pack the thirteen cards forming the suit of diamonds and arrange them in this order face downwards with the 3 at the top and 5 at the bottom: 3, 8, 7, ace, queen, 6, 4, 2, jack, king, 10, 9, 5. Now play them out in a row on the table in this way. As you spell "ace" transfer for each letter a card from the top to the bottom of the pack—A-C-E—and play the fourth card on to the table. Then spell T-W-O, while transferring three more cards to the bottom, and place the next card on the table. Then spell T-H-R-E-E, while transferring five to the bottom, and so on until all are laid out in a row, and you will find they will be all in regular order. Of course you will spell out the knave as J-A-C-K. Can you arrange the whole pack so that they will play out correctly in order, first all the diamonds, then the hearts, then the spades, and lastly the clubs?

737.—MISSING LETTERS.

OUR puzzle, "The Dishonest Dairyman," has inspired C. D. G. H. to construct the following. Can you make sense of it by simply adding the letter a inserted wherever, and as often as, you like?

T R R T N R B S T N D S N G S G B L L D
M N W S N S S M N I C S S P P Y S S L D

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

729.—A CURIOUS CHESS PUZZLE.

1. K—K 7, B—Kt 4, ch. 2. K—Q 6, B—B 5, ch. 3. K—B 5, B—K 6, ch. 4. K—Kt 4, B—Q 7, ch. 5. K x P, B—B 8, ch. 6. K—Kt 4, B—Q 7, ch. 7. K—B 5, B—K 6, ch. 8. K—Q 6, B—B 5, ch. 9. K—K 7, B—Kt 4, ch. 10. K—B 8, B—R 3. 11. Q—R 8, B x R, ch. 12. K—K 7, dis. ch., B—B sq., ch. 13. Q x B, mate. This is the best possible defence for Black. If he plays differently at any point he is mated sooner.

730.—WORD RINGS.

HERE are two examples, using ordinary words without Christian names or proper nouns, in each of which the sentence formed by the successive words bears some meaning:—

A L S O—S O M E—M E A L. E A C H—C H I D—I D E A.

731.—DIFFERENCE SQUARES.

2	1	4
3	5	7
6	9	8

8	1	4
3	5	7
6	9	2

2	1	6
3	5	7
4	9	8

THE three examples I give are, I believe, the only cases possible. The difference throughout is 5.

732.—A CHARADE.

A-I-T. A small island in a river or lake, such as Chiswick Ait.

"The Toreador"

ARNOLD BENNETT

"The Bravo"

W.W.JACOBS

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

SHERLOCK HOLMES STOR

The Adventure of the Illustrious Client - Part II

BY

A.CONAN DOYL

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EAT plenty of good, nourishing bread. But let it be HOVIS because HOVIS contains full nourishment for the body.

HOVIS

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is made only from wheat, like white bread, but with this important difference: it contains added quantities of the vital 'germ' which constitutes its most nourishing and vitalising part.

Your Baker Bakes it.

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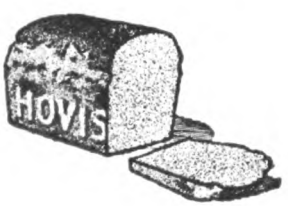

You *can't* get wet in the "Mattamac" (Regd.)

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Feather Weight STORMPROOF

The 1925 PRICE REDUCTIONS, made possible by greatly increased production and, consequently, **lessened working costs** show an appreciable saving on every "Mattamac" Stormproof. Whilst every detail to the last stitch and button is identical with the high standard of 1924, the unbelted Coat comes down from 35/- **to 29/6** and the belted Coat from 39/6 **to 32/3**, with Riding, Sporting, and Children's Coats in ratio. Without any qualification whatever, the genuine "Mattamac" is the best Coat of its kind in the World and **the best Coat-value procurable.**

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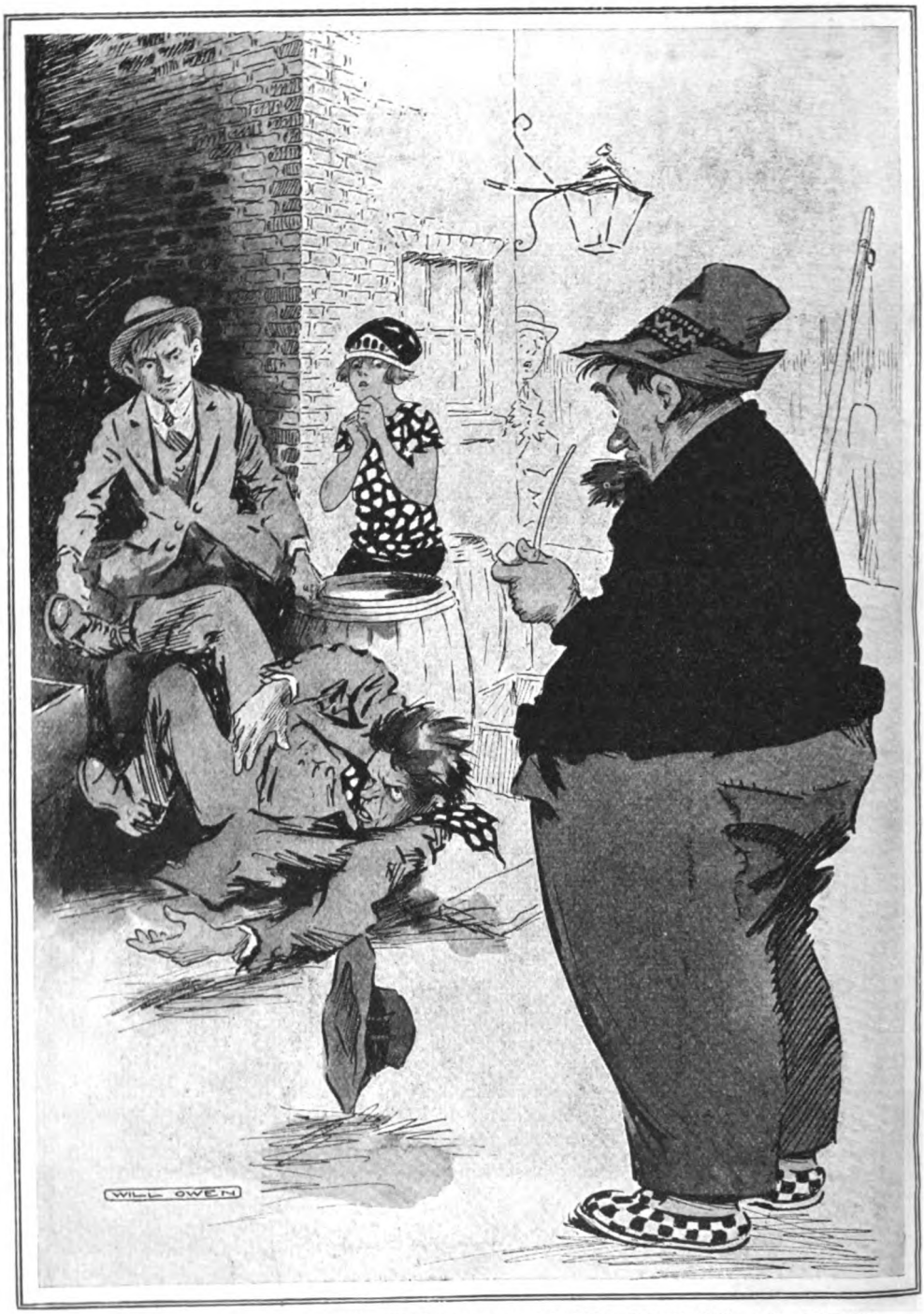
The STRAND MAGAZINE

MARCH, 1925.



"STAND UP," SES ALF, "AND TAKE WOT'S COMING TO YOU." SID GOT UP, AND THE NEXT MOMENT ALF WAS ON THE GROUND WONDERING WOT 'AD 'APPENED TO 'IM.

(See page 221.)

The Bravo

by

W. W. JACOBS

ILLUSTRATED BY WILL OWEN

THERE was a chill air off the river, and the water looked cold and dark. Side-lights were already appearing, and the siren of a large steamer coming up indulged in grievous lamentations. A slight shiver altered for a moment the contour of the night-watchman's jersey. He patted it tenderly.

"There's worse things than loneliness, though," he said after a long silence, "and a man as does his dooty can always find something to do."

He got up from the bollard and, with a faint grunt, stooped and picked up his broom. A voice from the next wharf told him to take care not to overdo it.

That's the new man next door, said the night-watchman. He's feeling lonely and 'e wants me to answer him back—and I sha'n't.

I used to feel like it myself at fust; not that I ever gave any lip to my olders and betters; but I used to feel I wanted somebody to talk to. One time I let a painter chap come and paint 'ere. He used to paint ships and things, and that lasted till one day he asked to be allowed to paint my portrait. It took 'im three evenings. He showed it to me when it was finished as if 'e was proud of it; and then 'e went straight off 'ome, packing up his things as 'e went and talking about sending for the police.

Arter that I 'ad a dog for company. Bull-terrier he was, and somebody must ha' paid a lot o' money for 'im. I had 'im a couple o' months, and then the landlord of the Albion offered me a couple o' quid for 'im, and while I was trying to raise him to two pun' ten some low, dirty, sneaking thief got 'im for nothing. There's people about 'ere as would steal your whiskers off your face if they wanted 'em. And if you went to the police about it the fust thing they would ask is where you got them from.

I 'ad another dog arter that, but 'e wasn't wot you might call a success. He bit three people in a fortnight, and then 'e bit me. The last I see of him, he was trying to swim across the river with a brick.

A watchman is best all alone by 'imself. He can't cheat 'imself at cards, and any drink he pays for isn't money wasted. I 'ad a little lesson once about keeping myself to myself and it done me good. Though I didn't see it at the time.

It was just such an evening as this might be. I 'ad been hard at work tidying up, and was just thinking of getting my ladder and lighting up, when the wicket was pushed open sudden and a young feller 'opped in follered by a gal. They shut it arter them very gentle and then stood there talking in w'ispers and looking round at me.

"Ullo!" I ses. "Wot's all this about?"

"*Hsh!*" ses the gal. "*Hsh!*"

"Wot d'you want?" I ses, very loud, a-purpose. "Who asked you to come on my wharf and *hsh* me about?"

Pretty little thing she was, about eighteen, with nice large blue eyes and brown 'air.

"We're escaping," she ses, coming up and catching 'old of my arm.

"Wot 'ave you been doing?" I ses, trying to speak severe.

"Nothing," she ses, shaking her 'ead.

"Wot's *he* been doing, then?" I ses.

"Nothing that I'm ashamed of," ses the young feller. "I'm only walking out with my young lady, that's all."

"Well, you can't walk out with 'er on my wharf," I ses, rather sharp. "Is 'er father arter 'er, or wot?"

He stood there looking at me like a silly fool. A rather smallish chap, dressed up to the nines, with a necktie like a rainbow in a fit. If he'd been a gal I should 'ave

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called 'im rather good-looking, but 'e was too pretty-pretty for a man. Twice he opened 'is mouth to speak, and only gave a silly smile instead.

"It ain't 'er father," he ses at last, with a funny little laugh.

"It's the young man I used to walk out with afore I was old enough to know my own mind," ses the gal, turning to me. "I never reely liked 'im. He's always getting into fights; and now he says if 'e sees Charlie with me he'll knock his 'ead off and make 'im swaller it. I saw 'im behind us just now, and if your gate 'adn't been open I don't know wot would 'ave happened."

"But you ain't afraid of 'im?" I ses to the young man.

"I ain't afraid of any man," he ses, very upright. "But I don't want my 'ead knocked off. 'Ow would you like it yourself?"

"'Ow big is he?" I ses.

"About my size," ses Charlie, considering.

"Well, you needn't be afraid of a shrimp like that," I ses. "Neither of you can't hurt each other enough to signify. You get off my wharf and, if he starts on you, knock 'im down. Give 'im one in the bread-basket with your left, and when 'e bends over drive your right to 'is jaw."

"And s'pose 'e don't bend over?" ses Charlie.

"He wouldn't," ses the gal. "Not if I know 'im. If Charlie did manage to hit 'im in the—where you said, he'd 'arf kill 'im."

Charlie nodded and turned pale. He could turn pale all right, but even the things I said to 'im couldn't make 'im blush. She turned red instead, and I caught one look from 'er blue eyes—when she didn't think I was looking—that fair startled me.

"Well, I've give you good advice," I ses, "and if you don't take it you must leave it. If I was walking out with a gal like that I'd fight a ridgiment of soldiers for 'er; one down and t'other come up."

She gave me a nice look then and I began to feel a bit sorry for 'er. Gals can't 'elp their feelings, when all is said and done.

"I'll just step outside and see if there is anybody 'anging about," I ses; "if not, off you go."

I WALKED to the gate, but couldn't see anybody. Then I strolled round the corner, careless-like, with my 'ands in my pockets, and the fust thing I see was a young feller walking up and down and looking all ways at once, as the saying is. Nasty face he'd got; sharp eyes and a nose that wasn't, and big ugly teeth.

"Lost anything?" I ses as I passed.

"Go an' boil your face," he ses.

I didn't answer 'im; I gave 'im a smile instead. Just the sort of smile kind old ladies turn round and give to little children when they pass 'em. Then I walked back slow to the wharf, and I 'ad just got one leg inside the gate when a stone came along and caught me on the other.

Nasty smack it was, too, and if I could ha' got hold of 'im I'd ha' tore 'im limb from limb. I went round the corner to look for 'im, but o' course he 'ad disappeared, and when I got back to the wharf Charlie and the gal 'ad disappeared too.

I got my ladder and lit the lamps. It was dark by the time I 'ad finished and 'ad a pipe in the office. I went out on the wharf again, and arter a time I began to fancy things. I thought I 'eard little rustlings and whisperings. Twice I stopped and listened and then everything was as silent as the grave. Then I 'eard a little sneeze.

They was sitting on a box—a little box—be'ind a pile of empties in the angle of the warehouse there, holding each other's 'and. I spoke to 'em sharp at fust, but the gal was so sorry when she 'eard about my leg that I 'adn't the 'art to say much. Quite upset she was, with 'er little hanky up to 'er mouth and making funny little sobbing noises.

"That's a nice quiet little corner," ses Charlie, as I walked down to the gate with 'em. "It might ha' been made for us."

"Only it wasn't," I ses.

He leaned up against me, and at fust I thought 'e was trying to hold *my* 'and. Then I felt something 'ard put into it. I s'pose I was a fool, but I remembered my own young days, and I stood there trying to think wot I could do for 'em.

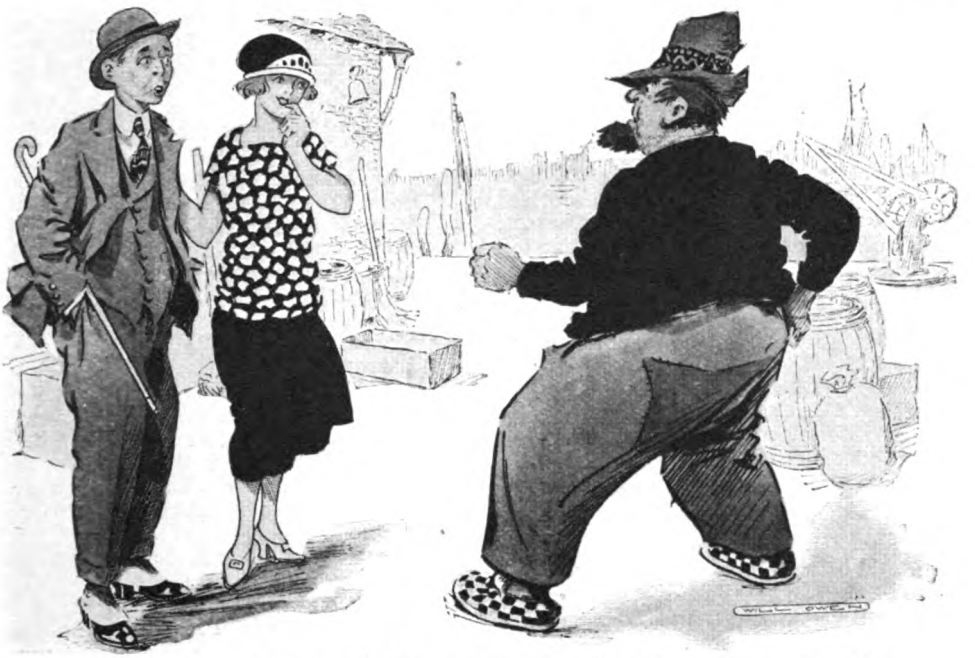
"The corner won't run away," I ses, "and so long as there's no craft alongside, or at any rate none of the hands about, I don't know why you shouldn't go there for a breath of fresh air sometimes."

They both thanked me at once, and I could see wot a load it was off Charlie's mind to think as 'ow 'e could go on courting in comfort and safety. The gal went off by 'erself, in case the other chap, Alf Stevens, should be 'anging about, and arter I 'ad allowed Charlie to stand me a pint in the Bull's Head, he went off too.

I didn't see anything of 'em for the next two days, but on the third evening there was a little tapping noise on the gate, and when I opened the wicket the gal put 'er little 'ead in and smiled at me.

"Can I come in?" she ses.

"Yes," I ses; "there's nothing up to-night. You can 'ave the wharf all to your two selves. Where is he?"



" You get off my wharf and, if he starts on you, knock 'im down. Give 'im one in the bread-basket with your left."

" He's coming a roundabout way," she ses. " It's safer."

I didn't say nothing ; arter all it was *'er* young man, but I coughed. I couldn't 'elp it. And when she patted me on the back it made me cough again. Nice little 'and she'd got, but 'arder than wot I expected. Especially the second time.

I stood talking to 'er a little while arter she 'ad got into 'er corner. Besides the other things, I 'ad moved three or four empty barrels in front so as to make 'em quite private, and she couldn't thank me enough for it. She said it was evident I knew my way about, and she wondered 'ow many 'arts I 'ad broke afore I settled down. I told 'er of one or two, and just as she was shaking her 'ead at me and asking me whether all men was like that, or only sailormen, the wharf bell rang.

" Oh, make 'aste," she ses ; " it sounds as if 'e was in a hurry."

I trotted off and unlocked the gate and Charlie a'most fell into my arms. Pale as a ghost 'e was and shaking all over. Then I put my 'ead outside and saw Alf Stevens.

He pulled up short as 'e see me, and we stood looking at each other ; me inside and 'im outside. Then 'e steps forward, as bold as brass, to come on to the wharf.

" Wot do you want ? " I ses, blocking the way.

" I want to come inside," he ses, shoving 'is face close up to mine. " I believe you've got my gal there."

" You run off 'ome and play," I ses. " I've 'ad enough o' little boys coming on to my wharf and stealing lumps o' coke. Go off an' 'ave a little game of 'opscotch all by yourself."

I slammed the wicket just in time, and, judging by the noise 'is fist made on it, I didn't lose anything I wanted much. He must 'ave pretty near broke 'is knuckles, and the langwidge 'e used about it was shocking. When I called out and asked 'im whether he 'ad ever been to Sunday-school, it got worse.

" You've done it now," ses Charlie, trembling.

" Cheer up ! " I ses. " You've got the gal and you can't expect to 'ave everything. Even if he does set about you 'e can't kill you, and if 'e does he'll be 'ung for it. I'll see as 'ow he don't escape."

I might 'ave saved my breath ; and the gal was a'most as upset as 'e was. Alf Stevens was still outside talking to 'imself, and when I called out to ask whether he'd like a cough-lozenge they both caught 'old of me and asked me not to make 'im worse.

" Think of poor Charlie," ses the gal.

They was both of 'em in such a state I didn't like to leave 'em, so I found a little

box for myself and sat down to keep 'em company. I told 'em some of the things wot 'ad 'appened to me while I was at sea; 'ow I'd nearly been shipwrecked three times, and 'ow on one ship we was short-'anded cos 'arf the hands was below in their bunks through fighting me. Then I made 'em feel the place on my 'ead where I'd been hit with the leg of a chair, but nothing seemed to cheer 'em up, and arter wasting about an hour of my time I got up and left 'em.

I done a bit o' tidying up fust and then I went into the office and 'ad a look at the newspaper. By the time I'd done that it was getting late, and I was just getting up to see 'ow Charlie and Maud was getting on when I see them looking at me through the winder.

"It's time we was going," ses Charlie.

"I'll come and open the gate for yer," I ses, feeling in my pocket.

"And wot about Alf?" ses Charlie.

"Well, wot about 'im?" I ses.

"Has 'e gorn?" he ses.

"Must ha' done," I ses. "You'll get Alf on the brain if you ain't careful. Besides, if 'e ain't, he couldn't 'urt you much to-night. Think wot a smash he 'it that gate with 'is fist."

"I don't like to think of it," he ses, with a shiver; "it might 'ave been me."

"Well, I'll go and see if the coast is clear," I ses at last.

I crept on tiptoe to the gate and unlocked it without a sound. Then I began opening it very gentle, and I 'ad just got it open about six inches when Mister Alf rushed at it with 'is shoulder.

He got 'arf-way in and then 'e stuck. I stood agin it like a rock, and then I began to shut it, very slow. Nine stone don't stand much chance agin fifteen, and swearing didn't 'elp 'im. He was 'arf in and 'arf out, and, arter squeedging 'im for a little while I talked to 'im about manners, I put my 'and on his chin and flung 'im into the road.

"Now make a bolt for it," I ses to Charlie. "Quick! while you're safe."

"*Safe!*" ses Charlie. "'Ark at 'im!"

Alf was at it agin, and the things wot 'e said 'e would do to me when 'e got 'old of me showed wot a nasty mind he'd got. I locked the gate up, and then I stood for a minute wondering wot was to be done.

"We can't stay 'ere all night," ses Charlie, as we walked down the wharf.

"No, I'll see to that," I ses.

"If we don't go soon she'll get it from 'er father, and if we do go I shall get it from Alf Stevens," he ses. "If you'd on'y pulled 'im inside while you 'ad the chance and 'eld 'im we could ha' got away all right. You lost your presence o' mind."

"I'll lose something else in a minute," I ses, as soon as I could speak. "If you 'ad the pluck of a mouse you'd go out and fight 'im now."

"Oh, don't, Charlie," ses the gal.

"I won't," he ses, "for your sake."

THEY walked up and down arter that with their arms round each other's waists. It was all 'is arm was fit for. I walked up and down too, and while I was wondering 'ow to get rid of 'em I suddenly remembered that one o' the lightermen 'ad left 'is skiff tied up in the dock. I peeped over to make sure he 'adn't taken it away, and then I went to Charlie.

He paid up the five bob I asked 'im for neglecting my dooty, without a murmur. I got into the boat fust, and the gal follered as if she'd been used to ladders all 'er life. Then I 'ad to go up agin 'cos Charlie wanted somebody to 'old 'is ankles while 'e came down.

"Wot are you going to do about meeting 'er now?" I ses, as I started pulling.

"I don't know," he ses, 'arf crying.

"I've got an idea," I ses, arter thinking a bit, "but it 'ud cost you money if it comes off."

"I don't mind that," ses Charlie, sitting up as if the Bank of England belonged to 'im. "Wot is the idea?"

"Suppose Alf Stevens came round 'ere next Friday," I ses, very gentle, "and thought it was you, and it wasn't."

Charlie didn't answer at fust; then 'e asked me to say it all over agin.

"Suppose it was a young feller I know dressed up like you and sitting be'ind the empties in the dark, pretending to make love to Maud," I ses, "and Alf comes along and sets about 'im?"

"Who is 'e?" ses Charlie, staring.

"He's a young feller wot's very much fancied by them as knows," I ses. "I see 'im boxing at 'Oxton one night, and 'e was in a class all by 'imself. Wonderful, it was."

"Do you think 'e could beat Alf?" ses the gal, clasping her 'ands.

"Beat 'im?" I ses. "I tell you this chap is a *boxer*. One of the best at 'is weight I've ever seen. Alf Stevens would 'ave about as much chance with 'im as a baby would with its nurse."

"Sounds all right," ses Charlie, considering. "It's time somebody learnt 'im not to interfere where 'e ain't wanted."

"You be round on Friday night at seven," I ses. "I think I can get 'im all right. P'r'aps you'd better come by boat, in case of accidents. Bring ten bob in your pocket for Sid Groom—that's 'is name—and five for me for my trouble, and you'll find it's

the best bargain you ever made in your life."

I put 'em ashore at the stairs, and then rowed myself back to the wharf. It was as quiet and peaceful as the grave ; and though I crept up to the gate and listened, I couldn't 'ear nothing of Alf Stevens.

I went again in about an hour's time and looked out. At fust I thought he 'ad gorn, then I see something like a 'ead peeping round the corner.

"Why don't you go 'ome ?" I ses. "Charlie ses he'll 'arf kill you if you ain't gorn in five minutes."

I thought that 'ud wake 'im up —and it did. 'Ow he could think o' such things was a puzzle to me. And 'e didn't 'ave to stop to think, neither.

I believe 'e must ha' stayed there pretty near all night. I know 'e was there at two in the morning, 'cos of 'arf a brick as took a bit out o' the gate instead of me, by mistake, but 'e wasn't there when the 'ands come on at six o'clock.

I didn't see 'im on my way 'ome, though I was quite ready for 'im, and stopped at every corner. I 'ad something to eat and a few hours in bed, and then I went out to try and find Sid Groom.

He was out, as usual, and if I went into one pub I went into seven or eight. A man with proper feelings can't go into a pub without 'aving something for the good of the 'ouse, and by the time I found Sid there wasn't much of Charlie's five bob left. 'Arf an hour arterwards there wasn't any ; and some of it wasted on ginger-beer.

Sid didn't like the idea of it at fust, 'cos 'e didn't like hitting a man wot wasn't a pro, but arter I 'ad talked to 'im about the ten bob and Maud's blue eyes 'e gave way. He was in training at the time for a fight with a Bermondsey boy, and 'e said 'e might just as well punch Alf Stevens for 'arf a quid as a punching-ball for nothing.

"Mind," I ses, "we want 'im to think it's Charlie, and if you keep your back to the light and slip into 'im 'ard and quick, I don't see why 'e should know the difference."

"Wot's Charlie like ?" he ses.

I told 'im.

"'Ow about slipping into 'im instead of the other bloke ?" he ses, spitting on the floor.

"I don't think he'd pay you ten bob for that," I ses, shaking my 'ead at 'im. "You'll enjoy it all right once you start. And don't forget to put on a bowler-'at and a collar. And don't speak."

He said something under 'is breath wot sounded like a little bit of Alf Stevens, but I didn't take no notice, and afore I left 'im 'e promised faithful to come round and give Alf the surprise of 'is life.

She wondered 'ow many 'arts I 'ad broke afore I settled down.

I didn't see Charlie that evening, but a dirty little boy come round with a letter from 'im and I sent word back telling 'im Friday would be all right. The only thing that worried me was that Alf Stevens mightn't be there, but as I see 'im prowling about soon after the boy 'ad gorn, I 'adn't got much fear.

Sid was the fust to turn up on Friday night. In fact, I sent 'im on in front of me. Good-looking young feller 'e was, and in a bowler-'at and a clean collar 'e looked nicer than I 'ad ever seen 'im. I stood talking to 'im till the foreman 'ad gorn, and then we sat down on the jetty and waited for the others.

They came along by boat just afore seven, and Charlie come up that ladder as if it was a mile 'igh, and asking me to give him a 'and when 'e got to the top. I interduced them in a 'urry—to stop Sid's mouth—and then I went to the gate and looked out just to make sure Alf Stevens was there.

He was. I lit the lamps soon arterwards, all but the one near where they was going to be, and then I sat down alongside Maud, and was just going to show Sid 'ow to sit with his 'ead 'id on 'er shoulder when she got up.

"I know 'ow to do it," ses Sid, pushing me away. "Just put them barrels a bit closer."

"Wot for?" I ses.

"'Cos I can do it better when there's nobody looking," 'e ses.

"Wot's the good o' doing it at all till Alf comes?" ses Charlie, fidgeting.

Sid didn't answer 'im. He 'elped move one or two of the barrels 'imself, and then we 'eard 'im tell Maud to come and sit down.

We stood there waiting for two or three minutes, and then Charlie, arter fidgeting about agin for a bit, put his 'ead over and asked them 'ow they was getting on.

"You mind your own bisness," ses Sid.

Charlie come back to me trembling all over. "You go and speak to 'im," he ses at last.

I waited a little while, and then I ses, in a off-'and way: "Sid, I'm going to let Alf Stevens in now. Be ready."

"You let 'im in when I tell you, and not afore," ses Sid, very sharp. "We ain't 'arf done practising yet. I'm learning to be as much like Charlie to 'er as possible, so as Alf Stevens won't know the difference. And it takes time."

Then I 'ad to go up the ladder agin 'cos Charlie wanted somebody to 'old 'is ankles while 'e came down.

I thought Charlie would ha' fainted, and the things 'e said to me about my cleverness you wouldn't believe. If he 'ad only been as good with 'is fist as 'is tongue he'd 'ave been all right. It might a'most ha' been my missis talking to me.

I 'eard Big Ben strike eight and then I 'eard a little whistle from Sid.

"I think I know my piece now," he ses, when I went over. "Tell Charlie to 'ide 'imself, and then open the gate."

I put Charlie round the far corner and told 'im not to move and not even to put his 'ead round until they was busy, and then I walked up to the gate. I made a little noise opening the wicket, and then I stepped outside a yard or two and looked the wrong way, and a'most afore you could say "knife" Alf Stevens bolted in and ran on to the wharf.

"'Ere!" I ses, follering 'im up, "wot are you arter? Who told you to come on my wharf?"

He took no more notice of me than if I was a pet lamb. He stood looking all round

'im with his 'ead bent down, and then there came the sound of two or three of the loudest kisses I ever 'eard in my life. Alf Stevens made a noise like a hyena wot wasn't laughing, and the next moment two of the barrels was rolled out o' the way and e' stood looking at the two of 'em cuddling each other on the box.

"Got — yer—at —last!" he ses, grinding 'is teeth.

He bent over to push Sid away, but 'e 'ad got his 'ead buried in the gal's shoulder and was 'olding on to 'er as if 'e was frightened out of 'is life.

"Stand up!" ses Alf, pulling 'im by the collar. "Stand up and take wot's coming to you."

Charlie put his 'ead over and asked them 'ow they was getting on.

Sid got up, stooping, with his 'at over 'is eyes, and the next moment Alf was sitting on the ground wondering wot had 'appened to 'im. Then 'is memory come back to 'im and 'e got up and rushed at Sid like a madman, but 'e might as well 'ave tried to 'it the moon. Sid was dancing all round 'im, punching 'im all over the place, and every now and then knocking 'im down for a change.

I must say Alf was game. He fought as long as 'e could stand, and 'e could 'ardly walk as I 'elped 'im off the wharf. He couldn't see properly neither, 'cos he thought I was somebody quite different and asked me wot I 'ad done with my tail.

The others came along as I stood there watching Alf 'obble away. Maud was 'anging on to Sid's arm and looking up into 'is face, and Charlie was follering up be'ind making noises like a lost kitten.

"Didn't want to pay me the ten bob," ses Sid to me. "He soon altered 'is mind, though."

"He—he's got my young lady," ses Charlie, 'arf crying, "and ten bob too."

"Never mind," I ses, patting 'im on the shoulder; "a gal like that ain't worth troubling about."

"Wot's that?" ses Sid, shoving 'is face into mine. "Wot did you say?"

"I mean, 'e oughtn't to trouble about any gal," I ses, very firm. "He ought to get a little pet dog instead. A little dog as nobody else wants."

Sid stood looking at me for a moment; then he put 'is arm round Maud's waist and they went off. Charlie and me stood watching them till they was out of sight, and then 'e told me wot 'e thought about Sid.

I felt a bit sorry for 'im, but arter all bisness is bisness, and as 'e turned to go off I laid my 'and on 'is sleeve and gave a little laugh.

"Yes?" he ses.

"Ain't you forgot something?" I ses.

"Not as I knows of," 'e ses, staring.

"Wot about my five bob?" I ses.

I think 'is troubles must 'ave turned 'is brain. He gave a squeal that set my teeth on edge, and afore I could take my 'ands out o' my pockets he 'ad given me four or five bangs in the face as 'ard as 'e could hit. Then 'e turned round quick and run for all 'e was worth.

THE TOREADOR

By

ARNOLD BENNETT

ILLUSTRATED BY
F. MATANIA, R.I.

I.

CLIFFE was standing, a suit-case in either strong hand, on one of the platforms of the Maritime station at Calais, when he glimpsed Lucy through the window of one of the luxury-trains that waited here and there, casually—as it seemed, to be assaulted, stormed, and taken possession of by imperious throngs of well-dressed travellers who knew what they wanted, were determined to get it, were evidently accustomed to get it, and were in fact getting it. Cliffe had recently paid a tailor's bill, and he knew that there was scarcely an overcoat in that throng worth less than fifteen pounds; as for the women's plain but perfect apparel, he could not face the estimate of its value; but he knew the cost of their apparently simple handbags, for on the previous afternoon he had been pricing handbags, for his mother, in Bond Street. He was positively shaken at the thought of the amount of loose money in the world and of the number of persons in the world who were so placed as to be able to devote themselves to expensive pleasures involving large movements over the world's surface.

And he was the more shaken because he had just escaped from a northern town, appropriately called Workington, where he worked upon research in the laboratories of a vast chemical manufactory, the property of a limited company with a capital of seven million pounds. At Workington his surroundings were ugly, squalid, smoky, even filthy; ninety-nine out of every hundred of the inhabitants toiled laboriously amid the smoke for weekly sums which these occupiers of luxury-trains would spend without a second thought on trifles like an umbrella, a scarf, or a bottle of scent; probably none of them had ever travelled farther than the Isle of Man, and all of them had to take their brief, crowded holidays in August.

The astonishing contrasts of life, however, did not seriously disturb Cliffe's peace of mind. He was twenty-three, tall and muscular; he had the boundless, careless, cheerful confidence which comes to a small extent from a good education and training at an ancient university, and to a large extent from perfect health. He had a fortnight's leave, a passport, and a couple of hundred pounds—the product partly of earnings and partly of bonuses; and he was going to join one or two fellows in Paris for Easter. It was by no means his intention to scatter all the two hundred pounds, but you never knew what might happen to you.

On the previous evening he had made the acquaintance of Lucy at a dance in London, and since the encounter he had passed many hours in thinking about her and in wondering how and when he might plan to meet her again. Then he had seen her on the Dover-Calais steamer, and had been prevented by the crush and her strange flitting elusiveness from getting at her; and now he saw her for the third time with only a pane of glass between them. She had not noticed him.

He perceived from a metal disc dangling from the side of the coach the words, "*4ème voiture.*" At the door at the end of the carriage was a uniformed attendant.

"Is this the fourth carriage?" he demanded of the attendant, with that calm, jolly assurance which is the outcome of spacious homes, public schools, and universities.

"Yes, sair."

"Right. You just take these, will you?"

And the attendant eagerly hauled up the two suit-cases. Cliffe followed the suit-cases.

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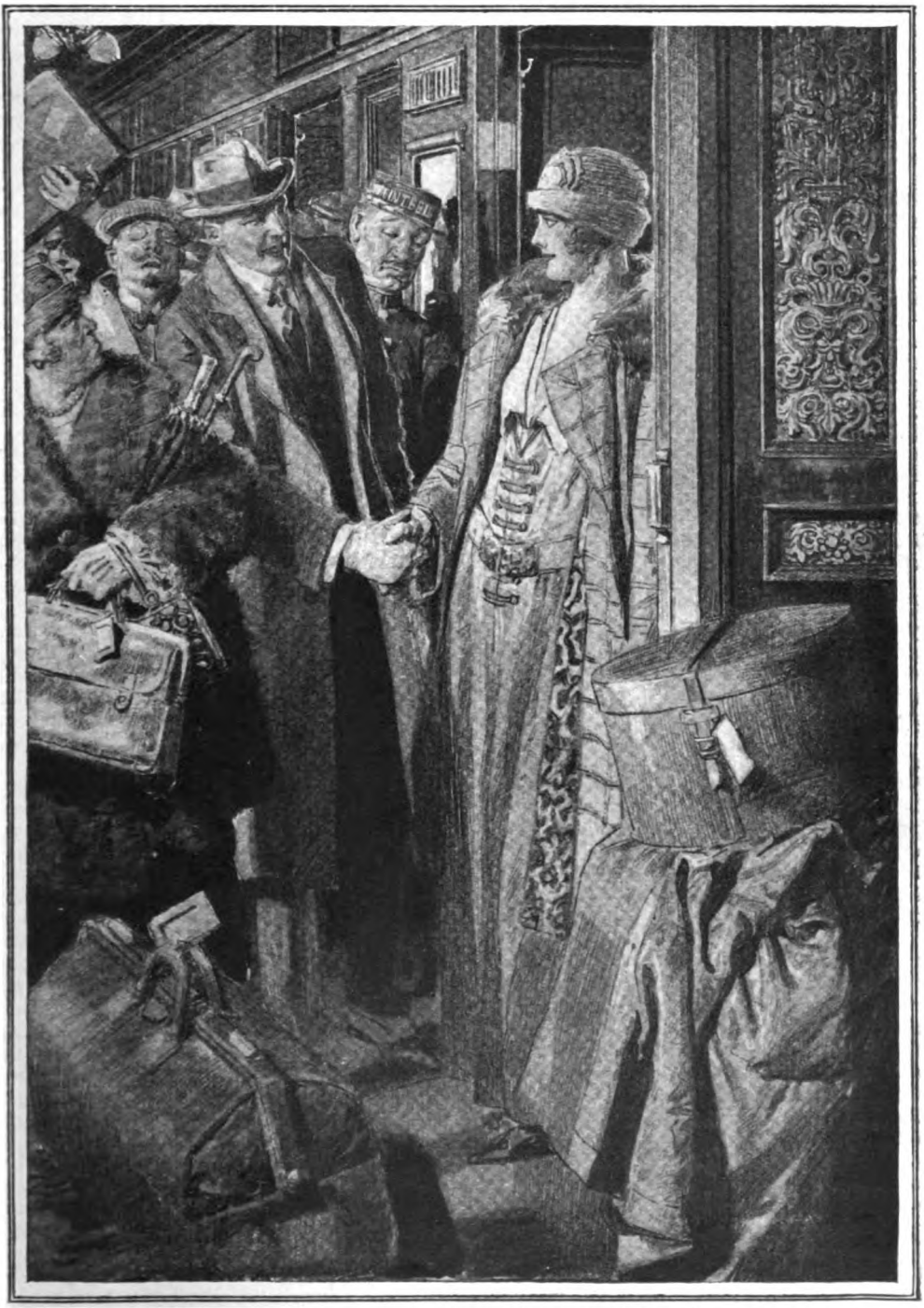


"Where are you going to?" she inquired, shaking hands.
"If it comes to that, where are *you* going to?"

The compartments and saloon of the coach were full of a disorder of travellers finding their places and generally settling themselves.

"Hullo, Lucy!" he exclaimed, lightly smiling at the princess of his thoughts.

"Hullo, Cliffe!"

(They had acquired in a night the easy intimacy of post-war manners.)

"Where are you going to?" she inquired, shaking hands.

"If it comes to that, where are *you* going to?"

"Seville, for Easter."

"So am I," said Cliffe.

"How ripping!" she exclaimed, simply.

There can be no doubt that the princess was pleased to be pleased.

"All alone?" he questioned.

"Yes, except for auntie's maid. I'm joining uncle and auntie in Seville."

"I must just get my place," said he, and left her. He vanished, not only from her sight, but also from the sight of the coach-conductor. It was not until after the train had well started that he approached Lucy again, with an admirable simulation of a long face.

"I say," said he. "I'm in the dickens and all of a mess. It seems you have to book your places in advance in these trains, and I didn't book a place. Did you?"

"Of course!" said Lucy, astounded and superior. "Weeks since! Do you mean to say you didn't know?"

"How should I?" he retorted. "I've never had time to go to the Continent since I was a boy and carted about like a parcel. The head mandarin here is fearfully cross, and he can only speak thirteen and a half words of English, and I can't speak any French. Do be a sport and tell him I didn't know. I expect you talk French like one o'clock."

Lucy laughed freely, very freely. The sequel proved that she did talk French like one o'clock. Trouble there assuredly was, and much of it. But, after a somewhat heavy financial transaction of a secret nature, the tangle with the train authorities was smoothed out, and Cliffe was accommodated with the berth of the head mandarin himself. True that during the daytime, if he wanted to sit, he had to sit on a tip-up seat in the corridor, but he did not much mind that. Lucy benevolently passed many moments in the corridor. It was during one of these moments — the train was dawdling round the outskirts of Paris— that she said to him:—

"You know, I can't get over you not knowing that in these big expresses all the places are booked in advance."

And he said to her:—

"But of course I knew. Only when I saw you in the train I decided all of a sudden to go wherever you were going. So I jumped in and chanced it."

Lucy blushed; Lucy frowned; Lucy left the corridor; Lucy did not appear in the restaurant-car for dinner. Cliffe thought how strange girls were. You always knew where you were with any man, but never with any woman. Still, he admired her reserve, though he feared her incalculableness. So much so that he slept little in the tiny berth of the head mandarin.

When, the next morning, at the Spanish frontier, they changed trains, Cliffe had to be diplomatic and generous towards another head mandarin without Lucy's aid. But she did speak to him later on, as the train was switchbacking over the interminable mountains of Spain.

II.

LUCY was a tall, dark girl, indeed nearly as tall as Cliffe, who reached five foot ten quite. Her father, now retired from the Army, had done service in every British war from 1895 to 1918. In no matter what part of the earth the integrity of the British Empire had been menaced, Colonel (once for a space Brigadier-General) Brest had been there to defend it. In the pursuit of duty he had suffered from frost-bite and from sunstroke, he had often been wounded, and he had lost the best part of an arm. Consequently he was very poor; it was easier to die than to live on his retired pay.

Consequently Lucy was poor. Nevertheless, Lucy, being familiar with a large number of well-to-do people, contrived to have a wonderful life of pleasure: suppers, dinners, lunches, automobile excursions, theatres, dances, and yet again dances. She got everything for nothing. Her very cigarettes were given to her; even books were given to her. Thus she was thoroughly accustomed to the fruits of money, while having none; and she had the fastidiousness, the yearning for the absolute best, of a millionaire. How she managed to be always smartly dressed I cannot explain; she herself could not have explained; it was just a girl's miracle. But many such girls accomplish many such miracles.

Her uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. John Brest, did a lot for her, because she amused them and often saved them from their customary tedium. John Brest, having manufactured military uniforms instead of wearing them, was of course very rich. Still, not a bad fellow—and generous.

Since their first encounter, at the dance, Lucy had passed hours in thinking about Cliffe Forrest, and in wondering whether he would have the sense to take any measures

to see her again. He did not belong to "her crowd," of which most of the young male members somewhat bored her. She could not quite make him out, add him up, nor take him down. Hence, though breezy with him, she had been careful. Any ordinary youth, who had bored her less than usual, she would have casually asked where, if ever, they were to meet once more.

Cliffe attracted her because he did and knew few of the things that her crowd did and knew, and because he was obviously very keen on certain strange and horrible toil at which he laboured in a strange and horrible town of which she had never previously heard. His descriptions were amusingly phrased. And he had sang-froid. The calmness with which he recounted to her how something (she understood not what) had exploded under a pressure of two hundred atmospheres (what were two hundred atmospheres ?) and left naught but a few tiny fragments of two workmen both frightened and enchanted her. Yet I doubt whether Cliffe would have seriously attracted her if he had not danced rather masterfully, had not had a fair complexion with fair hair, had worn a moustache, had not had sparkling eyes and a funnily deep voice.

When she glimpsed him on the steamer she had ingeniously avoided him and could not explain to herself why. When she saw him through the carriage window she had dropped her gaze. When he accosted her in the carriage and told her he was going to Seville she had begun to believe in fate. When he sought her aid to get him out of a most absurd and inconceivable mess she was really delighted. Could such ignorance as his exist ? She felt like a protective aunt to him, and enjoyed the feeling.

But when he brightly and impudently informed her that the mess was of his own deliberate making and that he had audaciously changed his destination to Seville for the sole reason that Seville was her destination too—then she became stiff, queerly resentful. And she was afraid. Further, she suddenly ceased to feel like a protective aunt to him, and constituted herself a protective aunt to Mrs. Brest's maid, who was sampling the Continent for the first time and mournfully considered that for all practical purposes it was inferior to England.

ON the second morning of the long journey when she entered the breakfast-car, with that false vivacity and vigour which come of two consecutive imperfect nights in two different trains, Cliffe was already there and eating a Spanish breakfast—consisting, strangely enough, of fried eggs and something called ham. Although there were plenty of empty places in the car, she was bound by one of those conventions which hold the structure of society together to seat herself at his table. It was a very bright morning, and Cliffe was very bright, and they were in Andalusia, the land of sunshine and love, oranges and lemons, cactus and judas-trees. They talked of all these matters (except love), and of the nearness of Seville and the marvels of Seville. And then the conversation sagged, and to lift it Cliffe began on the subject of his old father, who was gradually, in an amateurish and obstinate way, losing his fortune in the enterprise of raising farm stock. And the conversation sagged again, and Lucy in her turn lifted it by a discourse on her fragile, hypochondriacal aunt, whose new maid she was taking out.

Then she asked whether Cliffe had got a room in Seville, well knowing that he had not. She told him with cynicism that there would assuredly not be a room to be obtained anywhere at any price in Seville for Easter —there never was ! He laughed and replied that in a city of a quarter of a million inhabitants a room, and many rooms, would beyond doubt be discoverable.

She said :—

"Very well, you'll see," yawning.

And to herself she said :—

"This youth is beginning to bore me, like all the others."

The arrival in the romantic and burning city of Seville was extremely trying. The train seemed to throw out all the tourists in the world. Rows of hotel omnibuses and rows of hackney carriages blistered in the sun, and scores of uniformed men were shouting the names of hotels. The porter of the Hotel de Madrid assumed charge of Lucy and of many other travellers. Cliffe vanished into a mass of humanity. Presently he came with his two suit-cases to the crowded omnibus of the Hotel de Madrid.

"Have you any rooms ?" he blandly asked the porter, who was busy with hand-luggage.

Lucy waited with a superior smile for the answer.

"I could perhaps find a room for you outside," said the porter in good English.

And Lucy ceased to smile superiorly and pretended that she was smiling benevolently.

"How much ?"

"Seventy pesetas, sir."

"Not a night ?"

"Yes, sir."

"Rot !" exclaimed Cliffe, impatiently.

The porter shrugged his shoulders.

As the omnibus drove away Lucy saw

Cliffe hail a one-horse victoria and put his bags into it.

"He is an idiot," she reflected. "What does he hope for in Seville at Easter? And he does bore me—terribly."

But her diagnosis of her mental condition was wrong. She was merely very, very exhausted after forty-eight hours' continuous travelling.

III.

THE circumstances which led to his taking her to the great Easter Sunday bull-fight —perhaps the greatest annual event of the kind in Spain—were as follows. It was Saturday night. The large Moorish restaurant of the Hotel de Madrid was just a little less crowded and tinkling and noisy than it had been half an hour earlier. Lucy was dining at a small table in the company of an old gentleman, who presently rose to his feet.

"I must go and see how your auntie is getting on," said he.

"I'll just finish my cigarette, uncle," said she.

"Aren't you coming now?" he asked, suggesting by his tone that she certainly ought to come now.

"I sha'n't be long," said the obstinate creature, with a deliberately seductive smile.

The old gentleman glanced at his watch, sighed, and departed with much dignity. Anybody would have guessed him to be a general rather than an Army clothier.

Lucy, resplendent in a newly-given gorgeous Spanish shawl, was determined to await events alone. She had seen Cliffe Forrest eating by himself at the distant other end of the restaurant. She knew "intuitively" (that is, she guessed, and hoped or feared) that he had noticed her presence, but he had shown no sign of having noticed it. Three days and two nights had passed since he had left her in order to hail the victoria, and she had had no least glimpse of him. Odd! Exceeding odd! Especially having regard to the fact that his declaration about coming to Seville because she was coming to Seville had presented itself to the singular Lucy almost as a declaration of love! He knew where she was staying. Why pursue a girl over a thousand miles of mountain and plain if you practise a policy of neglect at the end of the journey? But men were always thus illogical! Anyhow, the enigmatic youth could not get out of the restaurant without skirting her table. She lit a cigarette and draped her flashing shawl afresh and waited.

At length Cliffe folded the newspaper which he had been reading, paid his bill, and stood up.

'She's alone now," thought Cliffe. "I'll have a shot at her. A couple of days to herself won't have done her any harm. She may be rather glad to see me."

"*Hullo*, Cliffe!" she exclaimed, looking up as he stopped, hesitatingly and innocently, at her table. "You staying here after all?"

He rose high over her, very fair and ingenuous in appearance, and she thought: "What fun to bring him down!" She pulled the shawl more tightly about her, held the cigarette loose between her lips, and imagined herself as a sort of super-Carmen.

"Rather not," he answered. "Seventy pesetas a night! I got a room without any trouble in a house in the Calle Gomez—six pesetas a night."

"But what kind of a room?" She spoke with an ironic inflexion, though she was impressed by his skill in falling on his feet.

"Well, it's clean," he said, shortly. She looked lovely to him, and dangerous, and he thought: "She mustn't be allowed to get above herself. And why doesn't she ask me to take a chair?"

"And what have you been doing with yourself?" she demanded, negligently.

"Oh, everything! Seeing life. Gallery. Gardens. Cathedral. Midnight service. Torchlight processions. And so on."

"I saw Thursday night's procession from the front of the Town Hall," said she, grandly.

"So did I," said he.

"I suppose you're going to the bull-fight to-morrow afternoon?" she ventured.

"I certainly am. I hear it's not at all a nice spectacle, but I think it ought to be seen—once."

"So do I," said she. "And I wish I was going to see it." She then told him that her hypochondriacal aunt, the most charming of middle-aged ladies, considered herself to be ill, and that her uncle would not dream of leaving her, his wife being his passion, and that therefore the bull-fight was impossible for her, Lucy.

"But surely you wouldn't *care* to see it!"

"Oh, wouldn't I? And why not, indeed? It's just like a man, that is, especially a young man! Uncle would have taken me. If a male can see it, why can't a female?"

"Oh, no reason at all!" he admitted, with an enrapturing smile. "I only thought——"

"Not a bit!" she stopped him. "You merely didn't think. Sit down. Here! Have a cigarette."

He sat down and accepted a cigarette from her tiny jewelled case.

"If only you were holding a rose in

your mouth, you'd look just like Carmen," he said.

"Oh, should I? A work-girl and a bad lot! Thanks!"

"Still, you *would*. I say, I wish I could take you to the bull-fight."

"But you can't!"

"No, they wouldn't let you go."

"That's not why," she retorted, quickly. "Do you think I'm a baby in arms? Of course they'd let me go. To begin with, I shouldn't ask them. I should just go."

"Well, do, then—if you mean it. But you'd have to ask them and I don't think they *would* let you go. They don't know me."

"No, they don't. If they *did* know you they naturally wouldn't consent." She laughed. He laughed.

"Come, then."

"No!"

"Listen," said he. "It begins at five; I'll call for you at four."

"Have you got seats?"

"No. But I'll get them."

"Hullo, Cliffe!" she exclaimed, looking up as he stopped, hesitatingly and innocently, at her table. "You staying here after all?"

She was about to say that seats were unobtainable, but, profiting by her experience of him, she refrained.

"No, thanks, I won't come."

"They wouldn't let you."

"You can't catch me like that," she said, easily. "But I won't come, thanks. If I really wanted to go——"

"You just said you did want to go."

"I was only joking. If I wanted to go there are at least a dozen people in this hotel who'd take me quick enough. Half London's here."

"Well," said he, "I'll call for you at four with a carriage."

"But I've told you I won't go."

"I know," he said. "But you might change your mind. There's a hundred to one chance of you changing your mind. And I'll call for you on that chance."

"Oh, will you?" she murmured. "Well, I sha'n't change my mind."

"I don't care," he said, smoothly. "I'll call for you all the same and risk it."

"She's the goods," he reflected afterwards, in the dark, mysterious Southern street full of tramcars and mantillas and venders of lottery tickets.

"There's something steady at the back of that youngster's silly eyes," she reflected, in bed. "I'm sure he's deliciously dangerous."

IV.

THE bull-ring. Two minutes to five in the afternoon. An enormous amphitheatre, with a tawny sanded ring in the middle large enough for the Final of the English Football Cup. Fifteen thousand people, mostly men, on the boundless rising tiers of the amphitheatre. The tower of the Giralda jutting up into the blue sky beyond the mountain of spectators to the east; and a hot wind shaking the lofty awnings that topped the mountain of spectators to the west. The sun ruthlessly blazing down upon the whole of the ring and upon more than half of the spectators. A brassy orchestra making a great deal of noise. The flutter of a thousand fans. The raucous calls of men in white selling water, pea-nuts, and strange sweets. The air vibrating with heat and excitation.

Two of the fifteen thousand were Cliffe and Lucy. She had come. She had nearly not come; but Cliffe's coachman was specially dressed in toreador fashion, and that splendid detail had decided her. She had entrusted herself to Cliffe.

In the matter of seats, he had not succeeded quite as well as she had expected. The fashionable seats were on high, and Cliffe's seats, though happily in the shade, were rather low down, among the populace. Lucy was the only woman within fifteen yards. Still, she did not really mind. He would protect her from the primitiveness of the populace. The dark faces near to her were too clear, the faces a little farther off were clear; and gradually the faces dwindled off into the distances, so that on the upper rows across the ring they were mere pin-head blobs of white punctuating the mass of clothes. Lucy felt herself to be in the midst of a frightening, heaving ocean of humanity. Cliffe alone was her lifebelt. And even he—— What could she make of a young man who had followed her from the Channel to Seville and then carefully avoided her for two full days? He was, he must be, in some secret and undiscovered way, formidable. She put on a courageous and defiant air, but she had her private and exquisite alarms.

"You'd better take that shawl off, I think," said Cliffe. "Too conspicuous down here."

She took it off. Above and behind them, in the select *paleas*, similar bright shawls hung over the balconies.

A bugle. From the east there entered the procession—espadas, banderilleros, picadors on horseback, and all the train of performers; gorgeously attired, the espadas in gold. The procession advanced with slow dignity across the ring to the west, bowed deeply to the Presidential box, and broke up into units, each to his proper station. The glittering units were like dolls on the sand.

Suddenly a magnificent black bull rushed into the arena and stood still, lonely, friendless, and terrible. Lucy's heart throbbed and she thought: "I am at a bull-fight. It has begun." And Cliffe's heart throbbed and he thought: "Well, here goes, anyway."

The bull was thinking:—

"Where am I? This isn't a field. I've never been here before. What's all this about? It's so bright I can scarcely see."

Then in the shimmer of sunshine he saw something offensively pink and dashed for it, head down.

Cliffe watched the proceedings with extreme intensity. Lucy divided her gaze between the proceedings and Cliffe, whom she glanced at every now and then sideways. He was oblivious of her. The toreadors teased the bull, tempting him with their rich pink cloaks and springing away at his onset. He was bewildered, could not select his prey, ran first at one and then at another, aimed his horns at cloaks instead of at bodies, and soon had a sensation of fatigue and boredom. Another bugle. The bull, near the side of the arena, saw a horse with a man on its back. "This at any rate shall not escape me," thought the bull. And he was right. The horse made no attempt to escape. He just stood, broadside on. The next instant the bull lifted horse and rider into the air. The rider fell on to the

bull's back and rolled into safety and scrambled up. Part of the horse walked quietly away. Lucy drew her breath in sharply and lowered her head.

"Steady on!" whispered Cliffe, without looking at her. "The nag's doped."

Then the moving part of the horse dropped down, agitated its legs violently, and died, and was covered with a cloth. And the bull saw other horses. Lucy glanced behind her, up the mountain of spectators, as if looking for a way of escape.

"No, you don't," breathed Cliffe. "You wanted to come, and you've got to stick it."

When the tangled remains of three horses had been covered with three cloths, yet another bugle sounded and the banderilleros came forward and stuck long coloured darts, two at a time, into the bull's back as, missing his aim, he lunged past them. The bull mistook the darts for stinging flies, but he was now too tired to occupy himself with such trifles, and indeed he had a more important matter to attend to. For presently the golden espada, or matador himself, with a long sword and a cloak more exasperatingly red than any of the other offensive cloaks, was facing him.

"Well, surely they don't call this bull-fighting?" murmured Lucy, when the espada, having taken careful aim, hit the bull in the wrong place, so that the sword flew out of the bull into the arena and the bull ran off, while the fifteen thousand yelled their derision.

"If he'd done that right," said Cliffe, "the sword would have disappeared and the bull dropped down dead."

"You seem to know a lot about it," observed Lucy, sarcastically, recovering herself.

"Yes. Out of the guide-book.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed contemptuously, when the illustrious espada had missed again and yet again. And to himself, challengingly: "I'm not going to have any of her sauce."

At length the bull, bored and indifferent, did drop dead.

"Sixteen minutes," said Cliffe, looking at his watch. Teams of brightly-draped mules cantered into the arena and cantered out again, dragging over the stained sand what a quarter of an hour earlier had been a living bull and three living horses. A few people cheered. The band played.

"Some of the cloak play was goodish," Cliffe remarked, judicially. "The fellow in gold, the matador, he was the best with his cloak; but what a rotten swordsman!"

"Oh, indeed!" said Lucy, still being sarcastic concerning Cliffe's assumption of expertness in bull-fighting.

"Yes, 'oh, indeed!'" said Cliffe. And to himself: "I must teach her a lesson. But she's coming through rather well."

The whir of fans was heard again and the calling of hawkers. Part of the arena was now in shadow.

V.

"*THAT* bull isn't five years old, I swear!" said Cliffe, when bull number two sprang into the arena, stopped, blinked, and charged after a flaunted pink cloak.

"Oh! how do you know?"

"Well, I can tell."

"And what does it matter, anyway?"

"One of the rules is the bulls must be five years old. More difficult to deal with when they're mature. Anybody could play *that* bull."

"You, for instance?"

Cliffe was conscious of a rush of emotional resolve similar to that which had actuated his change of direction from Paris to Seville. He was subject to these singular and surprising waves. He made no retort to the irony of Lucy's tone, except to snatch her shawl (which lay folded on her knees) and scramble down the few steps. He vaulted easily over the first barrier and less easily over the second. He was in the ring!

"I *will* teach her a lesson!" said he to himself, and unfurled the shawl—his one defence against the bull. The bull was now mysteriously standing hesitant close beside him. The toreadors seemed a long distance off. He noticed that one of them was looking at him; the rest were giving all their eyes to the bull. The arena was limitless. No sign from the assembled populace; a million mute dolls!

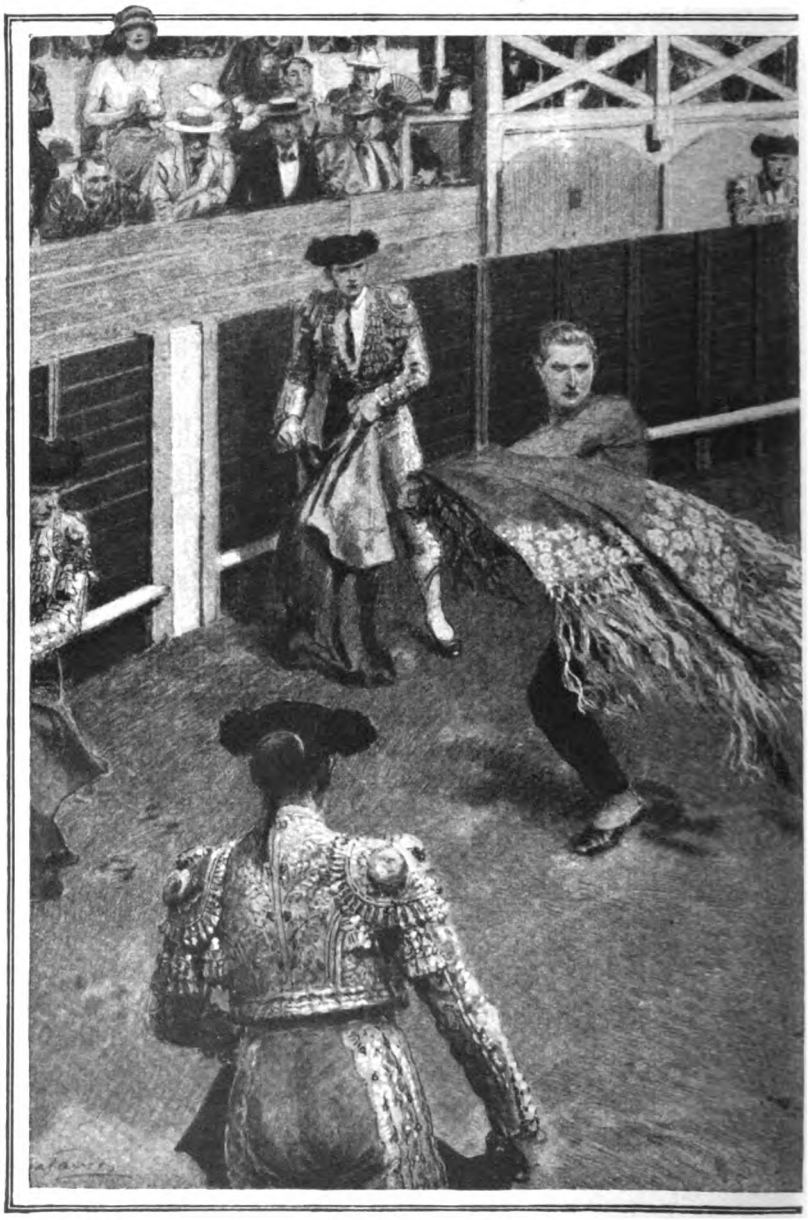
"I'd better get away from the barrier," he thought, and ran. The bull saw something new, insolent and attractive, and rushed for him. Cliffe stopped and flung outwards the shawl. For the bull, who, like all bulls, was really an ass and not a bull—for the bull the shawl was the enemy, and he lowered his head and aimed furiously for Lucy's precious wrap. He flew past Cliffe in the manner of an express train, of an elephant, of a mastodon, so close that the youth might have smacked his huge shining flank. The youth felt the warmth of his breath and the wind of his passage, and felt also in an awful flash of understanding that he had never realized till then the capacity of a bull as a self-impelled projectile. The youth did not withdraw the shawl quickly enough. He heard a rending. The bull bore off a fringed fragment of the shawl on one horn. Laughter from the grim populace! The toreadors were now attending carefully to their own safety. Cliffe was exceedingly frightened. He was aware of the great

heat of the sun on his head, for his Homburg hat had left him—he knew not when. Also he heard a loud knocking. At first he thought someone was hammering on the wooden barrier, and then he discovered that what he was listening to was his own heart.

"Why in the name of Heaven didn't I go to Paris?" he reflected. And then: "Confound the girl! Well, she's got something to think about now! I wonder if she's fainted? I may never see her again. I am an idiot. There never was such an idiot as I am." And so on.

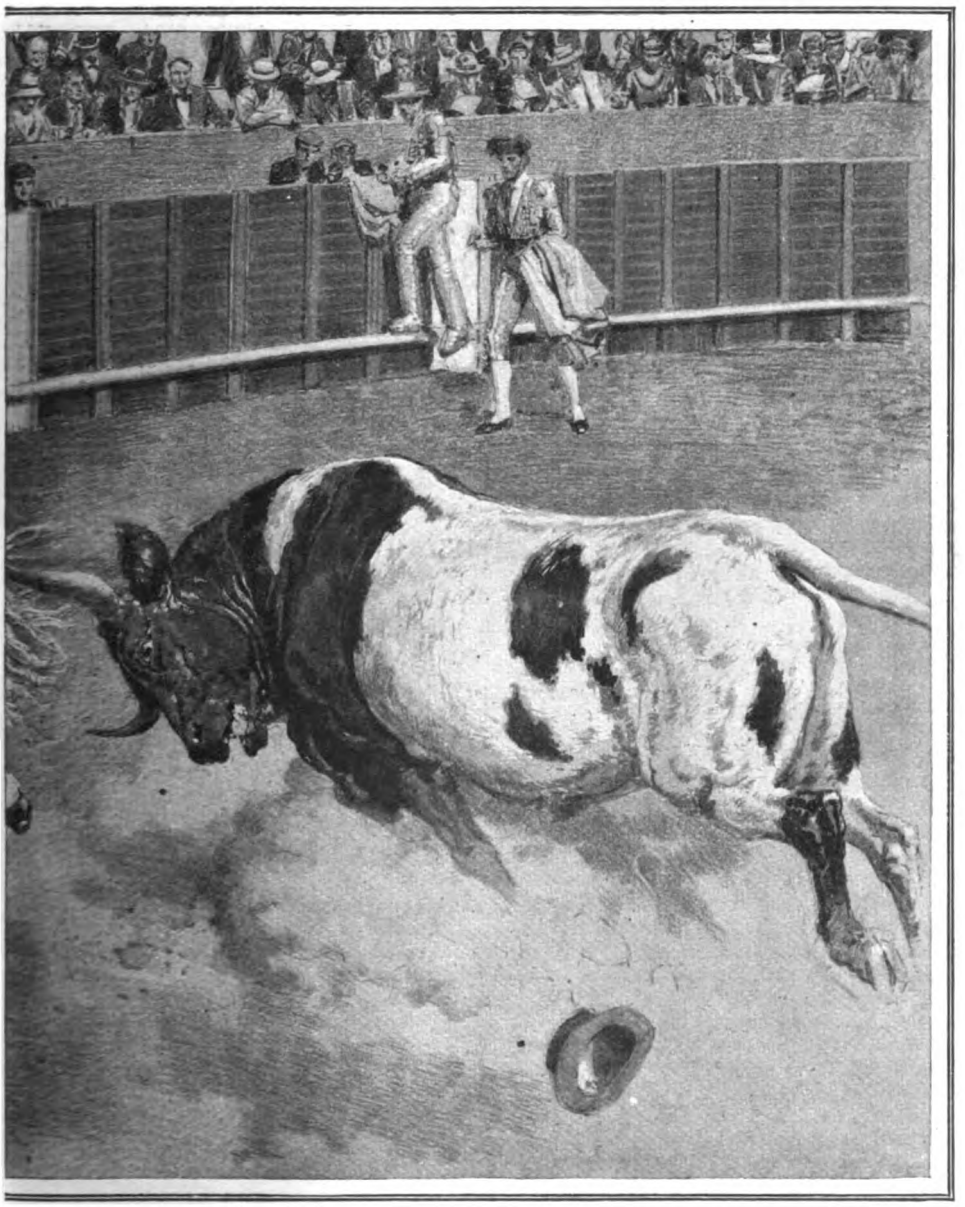
The return of the bull from several excursions cut short his meditations.

"No," he muttered in despair. "I couldn't possibly do it again. The mere thought of the bull, the whole vast bull, thundering past him with red eye, lowered horns, and flying tail paralysed him. There were no gorgeous toreadors now, no populace; there was nothing but himself and the bull in the interminable and shelterless arena. However, he awoke from his paralysis in the nick of time, and by force of cruel necessity did do the shawl trick again—and the bull got no more of the shawl. From this moment he received full confidence from the skies, and took his turn with the other toreadors in playing the bewildered animal. The faces of the other toreadors grew quite familiar to him. They grunted to one another in Spanish, but appeared to ignore himself. And then, as



Cliffe stopped and flung outwards the shawl. For the for Lucy's

the bull terrifyingly overran Lucy's soiled and ripped shawl for perhaps the fifth time, Cliffe felt a touch, the slightest touch, on his leg. The bull's horn had frayed his



bull the shawl was the enemy, and he lowered his head and aimed furiously

precious wrap.

trouser! Over-confidence, resulting in a quarter-of-an-inch grazing of death! Cliffe lost his head. Confidence, all of it, exuded from him like an escaping gas; and he ran for the barrier. The bull swerved round and was after him. The bull was the better sprinter. Cliffe knew that he was doomed. He knew that he ought to stop and turn and use the shawl, but he could not stop. Reason had fallen off her throne.

Then he saw in front of him one of the wooden hoardings placed at intervals round

the ring, with width enough between them and the inner barrier for a man to pass, but not width enough for a bull; refuges for pressed toreadors. He slipped into the interstice and found salvation. Instantaneously confidence came back to him. The horns of the baffled bull were within a foot of him, and yet he was safe. Rage seized him, and angrily he flung the shawl at the bull's colossal head. The bull tossed his head and ran off with the shawl, half-blinded by it. Roars of laughter from the populace. Cliffe was appeased.

He leaped lightly over the barrier into—no, not into safety, but into the receptive arms of two Spanish officials in funny hats. He was a captive. In doing what he had done Cliffe had transgressed the statutory law of Spain and subjected himself to grave penalties. His offence, indeed, was not uncommon. There was no going back to Lucy. He was separated from the entire world by the power of the law. What the Herculean Spaniards said to him he could not in the least comprehend. But in less than a quarter of an hour he comprehended that beyond the slightest doubt he was locked up, hatless, in a Spanish prison. The remainder of the bull-fight had no interest for him. He forgot the heat of the sun in the chill of the cell, where he had leisure to wonder what the other toreadors thought of him.

VI.

IT was not till after a highly-unpleasant night in the indescribable cell that Cliffe Forrest resumed contact with the great world. The authorities had other occupations on Easter Sunday night than to show mercy to malefactors. He might have been released earlier if the British Consul had not been out of town. Lucy, having learnt as much by intuition as by anything else the nature of Cliffe's fate, had hurried to her uncle and begun by confessing a clandestine visit to the bull-fight. Mr. Brest had the brilliant idea of searching for the Consul, but was not unduly disturbed by the Consul's absence from home. Indeed, Mr. Brest contemplated with amazing equanimity one night's incarceration for Cliffe Forrest. The criminal's release was preceded by a bed of justice, sinister interviews (by means of an imperfect interpreter) with the Alcalde and the chief of police of the city of Seville, and a cash payment of five hundred pesetas plus some important sundries. After which his crime was purged.

That afternoon, while Mr. Brest was allaying his fragile wife's alarms in the latter's bedroom, Lucy had a conversation with Cliffe in a secluded corner of one of the endless winding tiled corridors of the Hotel de Madrid. The noise of a little fountain and the song of a canary in a cage accompanied their talk. Both of them had a comically guilty air.

"But you might have been killed!"

"I might, of course. But, you see, I've baited my old father's pedigree bulls with a horsecloth before now in a field three times the size of that blooming bull-ring."

"Oh! Then you were a bit of a toreador. You ought to have told me before you started. D'you know I nearly fainted?"

"Served you right if you had fainted!"

"Why, it wasn't my fault!"

"Of course it was your fault."

"But I never challenged you to go."

"Not in words! But you did! And you jolly well know it!"

"Indeed I didn't! I never dreamt of such a thing. And what's more, I'll never speak to you again. You simply aren't safe."

"Yes, you will. You must come with me to the shawl shop by the Alcazar and I'll buy you a new shawl. After that you needn't speak to me any more."

"You just won't buy me a new shawl, then. I've got one."

"Already! You don't lose time."

"I've got the old one and the bit that fell off the bull's horns, and I've started to mend it, and I shall never wear any other shawl, dirty as it is, as long as I live."

"Oh!" murmured Cliffe, transfixed by her words and her downward glance.

Lucy said:—

"Naturally I'm bound to marry you now, seeing how seriously you take me. You aren't safe. However, I must risk it. I'm in for a lively time."

But she said all this to herself, with her gaze on the large black and white tiles.

GRANNIE GETS HER WAY

By

Lucy M. Royer

ILLUSTRATED BY W. HATHERELL R.I.

JOY, for Hannah Grimes, meant absence of sorrow, and contentment absence of dirt. For forty years Grannie, as she was called, had been a widow, and for forty years she had lived at the end of the scraggly village street. She was the thriftiest housekeeper in the neighbourhood, and the cleanest. Her clothes as they hung on the line, early enough to catch the first rays of the rising sun, were as snowy as the fence which she whitewashed frequently. Each week she got down on her knees and scrubbed the long brick path which led from the gate to the kitchen door. Each spring she dug her garden and planted her vegetables, and each summer she sold the surplus at the village shop.

Her son, Jim, who was the only child to survive the hardships of her widowhood, was a carpenter. By the aid of his wages she paid the mortgage which haunted her dreams for twenty years.

Life moved along smoothly for Grannie after the mortgage was paid. Then suddenly there came a change. Jim announced one day that he had married a girl from the neighbouring town and was bringing his wife home to live.

Grannie was up very early on the morning of their expected arrival, stepping briskly about her kitchen in square-toed, flat-heeled shoes. At eight o'clock she hung her apron on its peg behind the door and went into the parlour. This room, like the other parlours in the village, was seldom used on week-days, but this morning the blinds were raised and clean newspapers laid on the floor to keep the sun from fading the rag carpet.

Grannie smoothed the folds of her clean, starched, black-and-white calico dress, and sat down in the rocking-chair by the window. She ran her fingers over the white-painted sill to see that no dust had blown in, and then began to rock vigorously with her small body, held rigid and far forward as though disdaining the inviting curve of the high, old-fashioned chair-back. Her thin blue lips were drawn into a tight line, sharply defined like a healing cut. Her brown wrinkled hands had queer purple bruises under the skin. Her sharp black eyes had the hard look of one who has never had time to see beneath the surface of material things. Every few minutes she peered eagerly down the street with a gaze both expectant and fearful.

She saw them coming presently, Jim in the suit which she had cleaned and pressed, and Minnie in a gay-flowered silk.

"Why, she's only a girl," she said aloud, "and too young to do for Jim. But I won't mind the extra work. I'm strong." Jim was carrying Minnie's coat over his arm and her big suit-case in his hand. It seemed strange to Grannie to see him loaded down with a woman's things.

She went into the hall and pushed the folded carpet away from the threshold. She unlocked the door and then pulled and tugged. It stuck, and screeched dismally as it swung open. She nodded to Jim and shook Minnie's hand. "Wipe your shoes

and come into the parlour," she said. " I'll take your things upstairs."

Jim placed the coat and suit-case in her outstretched hands and sat down in the rocking-chair. " Make yourself at home, Minnie. Mother'll soon have dinner ready."

Minnie shook her head and her blue eyes smiled at Grannie. " You mustn't wait on me," she said. " I'm young and I'm going to help you with the work."

She leaned over to pick up the papers on the floor.

" Don't do that, Minnie," Jim admonished. " Mother puts them there so the carpet don't get faded."

" Is it just new ? "

" I've had it for twenty years now," Grannie answered proudly. " I sewed all the rags and wound the balls and got it woven with the first money Jim earned. Isn't it pretty ? "

Minnie went to the netting-covered mirror which hung between the windows, and ran her combs through her tightly-curled hair. " It's all right," she said, " but I like Brussels best."

" Brussels costs a lot of money," Grannie thought, as she carried Minnie's things up the crooked back stairway and into the sunny front room which Jim had always occupied. She put them carefully away and then with sudden determination went into her own room, which was over the kitchen. She unlocked her chest of drawers and took from their wrappings of flannel and tissue-paper the silver knives and forks which her husband had given her when they were married. There was not a scratch to mar their bright smoothness, and she handled them with loving fingers.

She carried them downstairs and began to get dinner. Minnie came into the kitchen. " I want to help," she said. " I can set the table." She walked over to the cupboard and took out some plates. Grannie was just lifting a pot from the stove. She set it down with a thump and took the plates from Minnie's hand.

" Oh, my, no, you mustn't touch them. That's my best china tea-set. I got it out to-day for you. I cracked a cup once," she added, ruefully.

" All right, I won't touch it." Minnie laughed good-naturedly. " I'll do something else."

" Oh, my, no ! I don't need any help. You run into the parlour and look at the album. It's very nice in there."

WHEN everything was ready she called them to the table. Minnie made no remark about the silver, or the glass bread plate, or the white china butter-dish with the placid hen on the lid.

" Seems queer to sit down to such a small table," she said to Jim. " There were eight of us at home with Pa and Ma. I'm the first to be married."

" Your Ma must have had a lot of work." Grannie looked sympathetic.

" Oh, Ma never bothered much about the work. It generally got done somehow. Pa never cared, anyway. You don't either, do you, Jim ? "

" 'Course I don't." Jim grinned at Minnie as he handed his cup to his mother. Grannie dropped her knife with a clatter. She looked with puzzled eyes at her son.

" I'll like this place," Minnie went on. " It's larger than ours, and there's the pictures. Jim and I can go in the evenings. Sometimes we'll take you along," she said, generously, to Grannie.

" Oh, my, no," Grannie answered. " I've never been to them. I've no time for such things. I must work."

" Yes, but I'm going to help you now. She needs help, doesn't she, Jim ? "

" I suppose she does." Jim went on eating. " I never thought about it."

" Why, I'm not old." Grannie spoke wonderingly. " I've always been the same. I've always worked when there's work to be done." She began to clear the table.

On Monday morning Grannie got up at the first streak of light. She opened all the shutters and then dragged up the tubs from the cellar and began the washing. At seven o'clock Jim came down.

" Where's Minnie ? " Grannie asked, when they were ready for breakfast.

" She likes to sleep in the morning, and I told her not to get up so early. She's not used to it." Jim spoke casually.

Grannie gasped. " Not get up ! Not get up ! Why, she must. I've got to get the table cleared."

" She says she never eats any breakfast, so it doesn't matter. And don't open the shutters so early. It wakens her."

" Not open the shutters ! " Grannie's tone was shocked. " Why, I've got to open them when it gets light. People must get up then."

" Well, you needn't slam them." Jim's slow, drawling speech held an unusual note of impatience. " And if Minnie wants to work, you let her. You know you're old."

Grannie sat still for a full minute after Jim had gone. " Old ! " she repeated. " Old ! "

" Of course I'll let Minnie help," she thought, as she put the potatoes in the oven to keep warm. " She can darn Jim's stockings."

She went back to her washing, but kept glancing in at the table and at the clock. Finally she dried her hands and went up to

Minnie's door. She tried to walk quietly, but her shoes screeched at the unwonted strain put upon them. She listened until she heard Minnie moving about, and then hurried down and put breakfast on the table.

Minnie greeted her with a nod and a stifled yawn. "I'm always sleepy in the morning. Why do you get up so early? We never did at home."

"Oh, my! Why, of course we must get up. People must get up to get the work done. It would be wicked to have the breakfast things lying on the table in the kitchen till nearly eight o'clock."

"But I don't want any breakfast. I'd sooner lie in bed. The work gets done, anyway."

"But you must eat breakfast. People must eat breakfast unless they're ill."

Minnie smiled. "I'm not ill, just sleepy."

Grannie looked helplessly about. Her eyes rested on the little black tray on the mantelpiece, and her face brightened. "Why, you needn't get up in the morning, Minnie. I'll carry your breakfast up to you on that nice little tray I got when Jim was ill so long. Then I can clear the table and go on with my work."

Minnie spoke sharply. "You don't understand. I don't want any breakfast. What do you suppose the neighbours would say? You, an old woman, carrying up my breakfast!"

"But then I could clear the table and go on with my work," Grannie insisted. Minnie did not answer, but went up to her room.

When she came down Grannie had finished her washing and was scrubbing the kitchen floor. Minnie watched her wring out the cloth. "How bruised your hands are!" she said.

"Oh, that's nothing." Grannie jumped up quickly. "I always get those marks from knocking around when I work. Now you go and sit in the parlour. I opened it for you, and you can darn Jim's socks."

But Minnie's eyes were on Grannie's hands. "I think Jim ought to get someone to do the washing for you," she said.

"Get someone to do my washing for me!" There was horror in Grannie's tone. "Why, what for?"

"Because you are too old to be doing it yourself. Why, Jim says you're seventy. Just think!" Minnie picked up the stockings and went into the parlour. Grannie did not move. "Seventy!" she said. "Seventy."

THAT afternoon Minnie put on her silk dress and went out into the garden. Grannie looked up from her hoeing. She pushed back her sunbonnet and wiped the drops of perspiration from her forehead.

"Why, Minnie, you got your best dress on, and it's only Monday."

"Oh, I always dress up when I go out. I know a girl here. Her name is Sallie Dustan. Perhaps we'll go for a walk."

"Sallie Dustan! I wouldn't run about much with her if I was you. She's a book reader, and I never knew a book reader that knew how to work or amounted to much with her housekeeping."

"Oh, you needn't worry about me," Minnie laughed. "I don't care about reading. But I like to do fancy work. I'm going to make the parlour look nice."

"Oh, my!" Grannie said, as she watched her go down the street. "Oh, my!"

For several days after that Minnie did not get up until eight o'clock. Each time she found the breakfast table waiting for her. Then she came down with Jim. Grannie was pleased. "I'm glad you're not tired this morning," she said. "Now you can eat breakfast like other folks."

"I can't sleep here, so I might as well get up," Minnie answered, petulantly. "You always wake me when you open the shutters."

"Why, I try to do it softly," Grannie said. "But I must open them when it's time to get up."

During the long afternoons Minnie sat in the parlour and knitted and sewed. She made loose covers for the chairs and embroidered a cover for the marble-topped table. On rare occasions Grannie took off her apron and sat on the sofa and watched Minnie's busy fingers. Sometimes her eyelids reluctantly drooped, and her head, with its scanty grey hair, nodded and stiffened and nodded again, finally to fall sideways against the horsehair cushion. She awakened from one of these naps one day to find Minnie standing before her holding out a piece of lace and ribbon.

"Here's a present for you," she said.

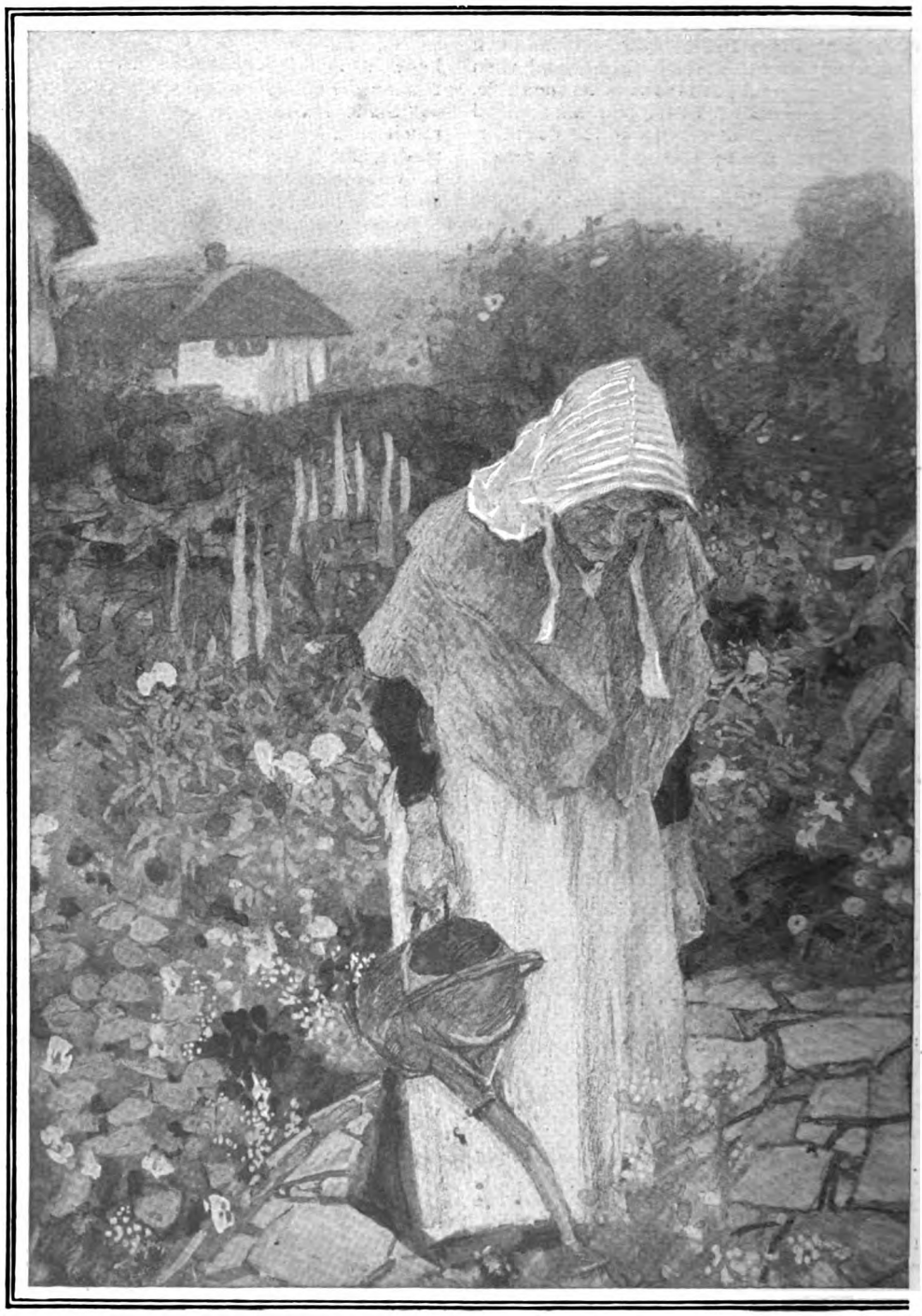
"Why, what is it?" The ribbon clung to Grannie's fingers.

"It's a cap." Minnie rescued it and placed it on Grannie's head. "They're very stylish. All old ladies wear them."

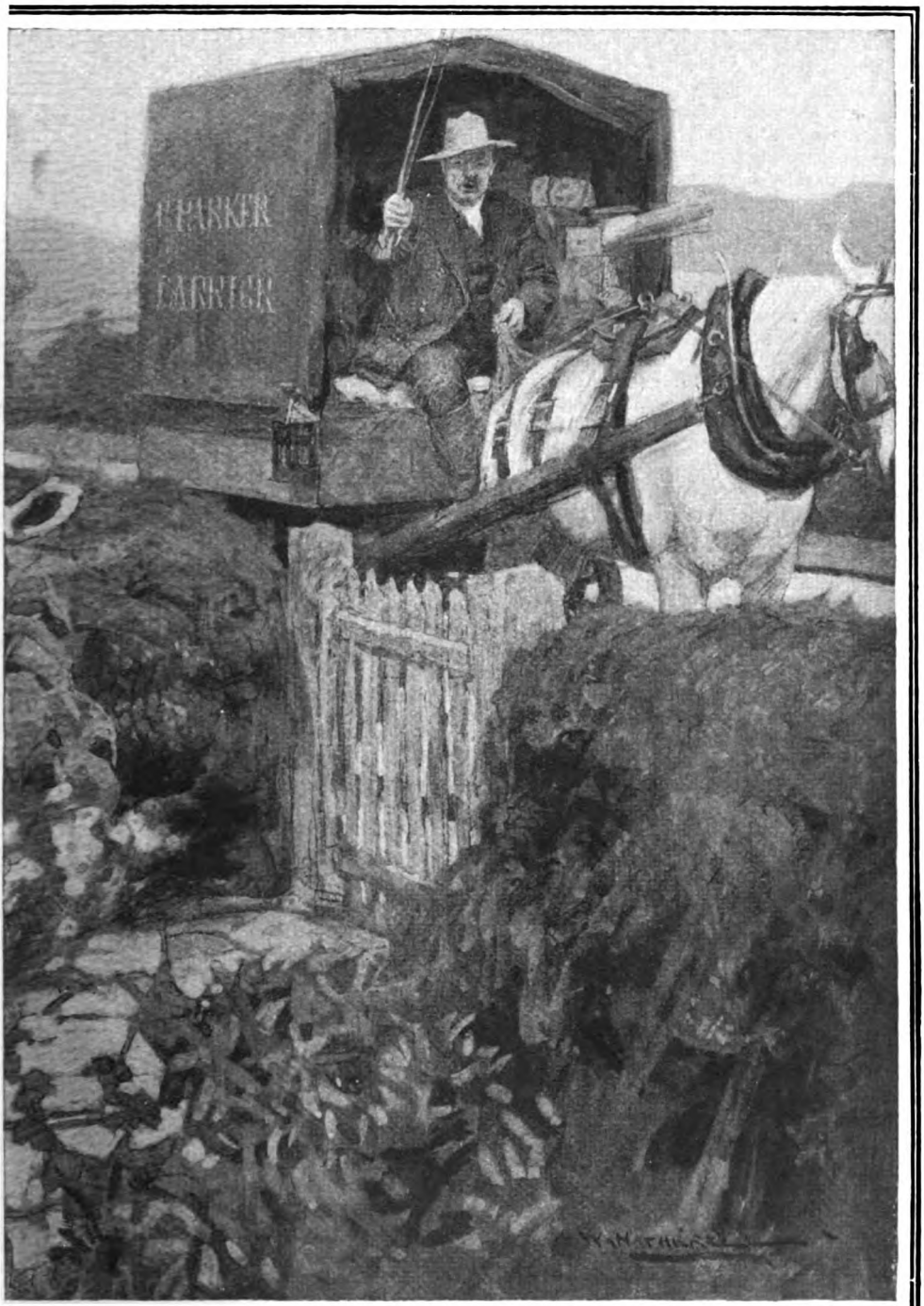
"For me to wear?" Grannie looked incredulous. "Why, what for? It'll catch all the dirt."

"Oh, it'll wash and it'll make you look like other old ladies. You can wear it when we have company."

"I never have company and I'm not old enough to wear a cap. But it's very nice of you, Minnie. I never had a present like that. Maybe sometime on Sunday I'll sit down and put it on." She carried it upstairs and laid it carefully away in her chest of drawers.



One day Sarah sent Grannie out to water the flowers in the bed near the front
Tom Parker until he stopped



gate. The watering-pot was held listlessly in her hands. She did not notice his horse and called to her.

"WE'RE going to have company! We're going to have company!" Minnie came running up the path one morning with a letter in her hand. "My sisters are coming to visit me."

Grannie put down the pan of potatoes she was bringing in from the garden. "Your sisters are coming!"

"Yes, to stay several weeks. They know a lot of girls in the village. We'll have picnics and parties and lots of good times."

"Picnics and parties!" Grannie's eyes opened very wide. "But the work, Minnie. Think of the work!"

"Oh, they know how to work. You don't suppose they'd let you wait on them. Just think! They'll be here in about a week. I must hurry to tell Sallie Dustan." She was gone before Grannie could speak. She closed the gate which Minnie had left open and then went slowly back to the kitchen.

"I suppose they'll have to come," she thought. "The house'll have to be gone over from top to bottom and I'll have to arrange it so they can't spoil things. I can manage somehow."

Early the next morning she began her cleaning. She went from room to room, sweeping and dusting. When she had finished the hall she put the key of the front door in her pocket. "I can't have them running in and out here," she thought. "They'll forget to wipe their shoes when it's raining. I can unlock it for them."

In a chest in the attic she found a big piece of homespun linen to cover the parlour carpet. The red plush album was put into the cabinet, as were the shells and the vase which had stood on the mantelpiece for many years.

Minnie came into the parlour as Grannie finished tacking down the linen. She watched for several minutes in silence. Then she spoke. There was a ring in her voice which made Grannie look up.

"You must think we don't know how to take care of things. Perhaps it's just as well, though, your arranging them like this. I forgot to tell you that Helen's bringing her dog along."

Grannie's arms dropped helplessly to her sides and her mouth opened wide. "A dog!" she finally whispered. "A dog!"

"Yes, a dog." Minnie's frown broke and she smiled. "Don't look so scared. He's only a little fellow. He does get into mischief, but we'll all watch him."

The tragedy in Grannie's face deepened. "Why, they're the worst. I can't have him, Minnie. I can't have a dog in my house."

"Well, I'm afraid you'll have to. It's too late to write now."

"But I can't have him, I can't." Grannie kept repeating the words to herself long after Minnie had gone.

SHE looked up eagerly when Minnie and Jim came down next morning. "You'll send word to-day for them not to bring him, won't you, Jim? You will, won't you, Jim? I'll give you the money to get word to them."

Jim did not answer, but sat down at the table and began to eat. When he was half through Grannie said again, "You will, won't you, Jim? I can't have him. I simply can't."

Jim laid down his knife. "No, I won't, mother, and I've got something to tell you. Minnie and I talked things over and we've decided you've got to go away for a while."

Grannie stopped half-way between the table and the stove.

"What did you say, Jim?"

"I said you'd better go away, over to Aunt Sarah Grimes, for a rest."

Grannie put the coffee-pot down. Then she turned to Jim. "A rest! What are you talking about, Jim? A rest! Why, what do I want a rest for? Ain't I always worked?"

"Yes, that's just it. You've always worked, and Minnie says you ought to stop it. You won't let her help you." Jim's speech lost its drawl. "She says the neighbours are all talking about her because an old woman works for her."

"Why, Jim, I do let her work." She looked at Minnie for confirmation. "I do let her help. She darns the stockings and wipes the dishes and dusts the parlour."

"Yes, and everything she does you do over after her. She's been telling me. I can't have the neighbours talking about her. Besides, you've never been away, and a rest'll be good for you. Minnie says it ain't right for you to work so hard."

"Oh, my! Oh, Jim, what are you talking about? I don't want a rest. What else is there to do but work?"

"That's foolish. You'd find it nice after a day or two."

Grannie sat down suddenly. "Why, who'd look after you, Jim? Who'd look after you?"

"Why, don't you think Minnie can work? All she wants is a chance, and you never give it to her."

"She can't take care of the house. You know she can't, Jim. I won't go. I won't."

"Now look here, mother." Jim's voice was commanding. "I suppose I ought to know what's good for you. I sent word you'd go over with Tom Parker to-morrow. He brings his vegetables in from his farm, and you can drive back with him. It's only ten miles. Now just make up your

mind to it. You need a rest and you're going to have it. That settles it." He picked up his basket and went out.

Grannie rocked her body backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, with her hands on her knees. Minnie looked frightened

"Remember, it's only for a visit, Grannie," she said, finally. "I can't have you waiting on us all. It's not right for an old woman. Your hands are all bruised and your shoulders are bent. Think how nice it'll be to sit in the garden there with nothing to do! You must take your best dress and the little cap I made you."

Grannie did not answer. Minnie waited for a few minutes and then went up to her room.

The smell of burning coffee brought Grannie to her feet, and she jumped to rescue the pot. She did not sit down again, but went on with the work which was to be done. She stumbled several times as she was going about, and did not hear the things which Minnie said to her. She went to bed very early and lay for hours looking into the darkness.

AT five o'clock she got up. She took the sheets, made from the linen which her mother had spun, and laid them in her chest of drawers. Then she put her two treasured cotton ones on the bed and smoothed them carefully. Minnie would put one of her sisters in there. It seemed queer to think of that. No stranger had ever slept there, in that bed where her children were born and her husband had died.

She got out her clothes—her clean, starched calico dresses, her aprons, her sunbonnet, and the cap which Minnie had made. When they were packed in her old basket there was still much room to spare. She took out the woollen stockings which she wore when it was cold, but put them back again. There would be something final about taking them, as though she might be staying away for a long time.

She sat by the window until she heard Minnie stirring. Then she took her silver knives and forks in her hand and went downstairs. She handed the package to Minnie. "You can use them when your sisters are here," she said.

She did not eat any breakfast, but drank a cup of black coffee. Then she got her camel's-hair shawl and her black silk bonnet and sat by the door until Tom Parker came. Jim and Minnie walked to the gate with her.

"Have a good time," Minnie said. "The change'll be fine for you. Don't worry about the work. It'll get done somehow."

Grannie's lips felt numb. She could not see the steps to the wagon. Jim helped her in. "Well, you are tired, mother," he said. "Now you can take a good rest. Minnie'll do all right. You needn't come till I send for you."

Grannie nodded her head but could not answer. She sat up very straight in Tom's farm wagon. He tried to talk, but finally concluded that she could not hear. She never spoke once during the ten miles, nor did she lean back against the seat. She thanked him when she got out at the old farmhouse. Sarah Grimes and her daughter were waiting at the door. "We got Jim's letter, and think it'll be a nice change to have you for a while," Sarah said.

"I can't stay very long," Grannie answered. "Maybe they'll send for me in a week or two. Minnie's sisters are going to visit, and Minnie thinks I can't work for them. Jim thinks a rest'll do me good. Minnie's nice," she added, loyally, as she saw Sarah and her daughter exchange glances. "She made me a cap. I'll wear it here, so that you can see it. But I can't stay very long."

But the days lengthened into weeks and the weeks lengthened into months, and they did not send for her to come. All day long Grannie sat in the garden and waited for a letter. "Maybe it'll come to-day," she'd say, hopefully, "the one that'll ask me." Her brown wrinkled hands lay upturned in her lap. The purple bruises were gone, but her fingers twitched restlessly, as though aching for the tasks which a lifetime of work made imperative. Her meagre body leaned against the back of the chair. She was always peering, peering up the road.

"The house-cleaning ain't done yet and here it's nearly summer. My herbs in the attic—she'll throw them out, I know she will. And the rain-barrel and the garden, and, oh, the house-cleaning. I must go! I must go!"

Sometimes she would doze and dream over the early days of her married life. "Five short years and three children to take care of. Jim had the croup and I was ill. I crawled up and down stairs on my hands and knees to keep the fire going. There was no way to get the doctor. I saved him, but I couldn't save the other two. I weeded the cemetery paths to pay for the grave to bury them. I was ill then and had to work, and now I'm well and they won't let me."

One day Sarah sent Grannie out to water the flowers in the bed near the front gate. The watering-pot was held listlessly in her hands and the water trickled over her skirt and shoes. She did not notice Tom Parker until he stopped his horse and called

to her. She hurried out to him with her old alert step. "Is it anything for me? Oh, give it to me, quick."

"No." Tom hesitated for a moment. "Just thought I'd tell you that fall didn't hurt Jim as much as was expected. He'll be all right soon."

Grannie held on to the fence. "Jim hurt and I didn't know it! Oh, why didn't someone tell me?"

Tom could offer no answer. Grannie turned and almost ran into the house, untying her apron as she went.

"Sarah! Sarah!" she called. "Quick! I've got to go home. Jim's hurt."

"Now you needn't worry. He just hurt his leg a little. Did they send for you?" Sarah asked.

"No." Grannie shook her head. "But I must go. I must look after him."

"Now look here, Grannie," Sarah began in her kindly voice. "You can't go to-day. There's no one to drive over there. You'll have to wait until they send, and then you can go with Tom. Besides, you know, you've not been very spry lately. They want to give you a good long rest. Minnie's young and strong. She can take care of Jim. Maybe they'll send for you to-morrow."

Grannie did not answer. She felt helpless before the finality of Sarah's argument. They hadn't sent for her, they didn't need her.

She went to her room very early. She rocked her body backward and forward, backward and forward, with her hands on her knees. The muscles of her furrowed face twisted her features with grotesque and curious movements. She kept up a low moaning.

"Oh, God, I want to go home, I want to go home. Jim's my son, my only son. I want to work for him. I want to work for him. Oh, God, I'm not old; show them I'm not old. I don't want rest. Show them I can work for him."

Suddenly she stopped her rocking. "Suppose they didn't send to-morrow! Suppose they didn't send the next day! Suppose they never sent for her! Suppose she had to stay here and rest always until she died!"

She jumped up. "I can't stand it. I can't stand it. I must go, I must."

She got out her basket once more. All the clothes except the ones she had on were packed neatly in it. She pinned her shawl around her and put on her bonnet over the lace cap which Minnie had made for her. The clock struck ten and everything was quiet. She crept down the steps and out of the door and hurried down the lane. There was no moon and a fine rain was falling, but she did not notice. She knew every mile of the road. She had walked it many times when she was young, often carrying Jim in her arms. The way was very long to-night, and her legs trembled under her, but she did not sit down to rest. She kept talking to herself.

"I'm very strong. They'll know it when they see I've walked all the way. But I'll let Minnie work. I'll let her iron and wash up the dishes. And I won't open the shutters in the morning. I'll be very quiet. And I'll take the money I laid aside for illness to get Minnie a Brussels carpet. She likes Brussels best."

There was a faint streak of light in the sky when she reached the village and toiled by the silent houses. She was breathing heavily, but her walk quickened as she entered the familiar gate. She closed it very quietly and went round to the back door. "I mustn't wake them," she thought. "I'll sit here until they come down."

She sat very straight at first, but in a few minutes her eyes closed and she slipped to the ground and lay very quiet, with her head resting on her own beloved doorstep.

MINNIE'S scream brought Jim hobbling down the stairs.

"Jim! Jim!" she called. "It's Grannie. Oh, Jim, look at her! She's so white. Why, Jim, she must have walked. Maybe she's dead." Minnie began to sob.

Jim carried Grannie into the kitchen. He took off her bonnet and bathed her face and hands. When she began to show signs of consciousness he turned to Minnie. "I wanted to send for her long ago. We needed her and she wanted to come."

Minnie's sobs grew louder. "I know. I wanted her, too, but I was ashamed to own that I couldn't get along without her. And she didn't rest, anyway. She couldn't after all these years. Look how thin she is. But, oh, Jim, you don't think she'll die from this, do you?"

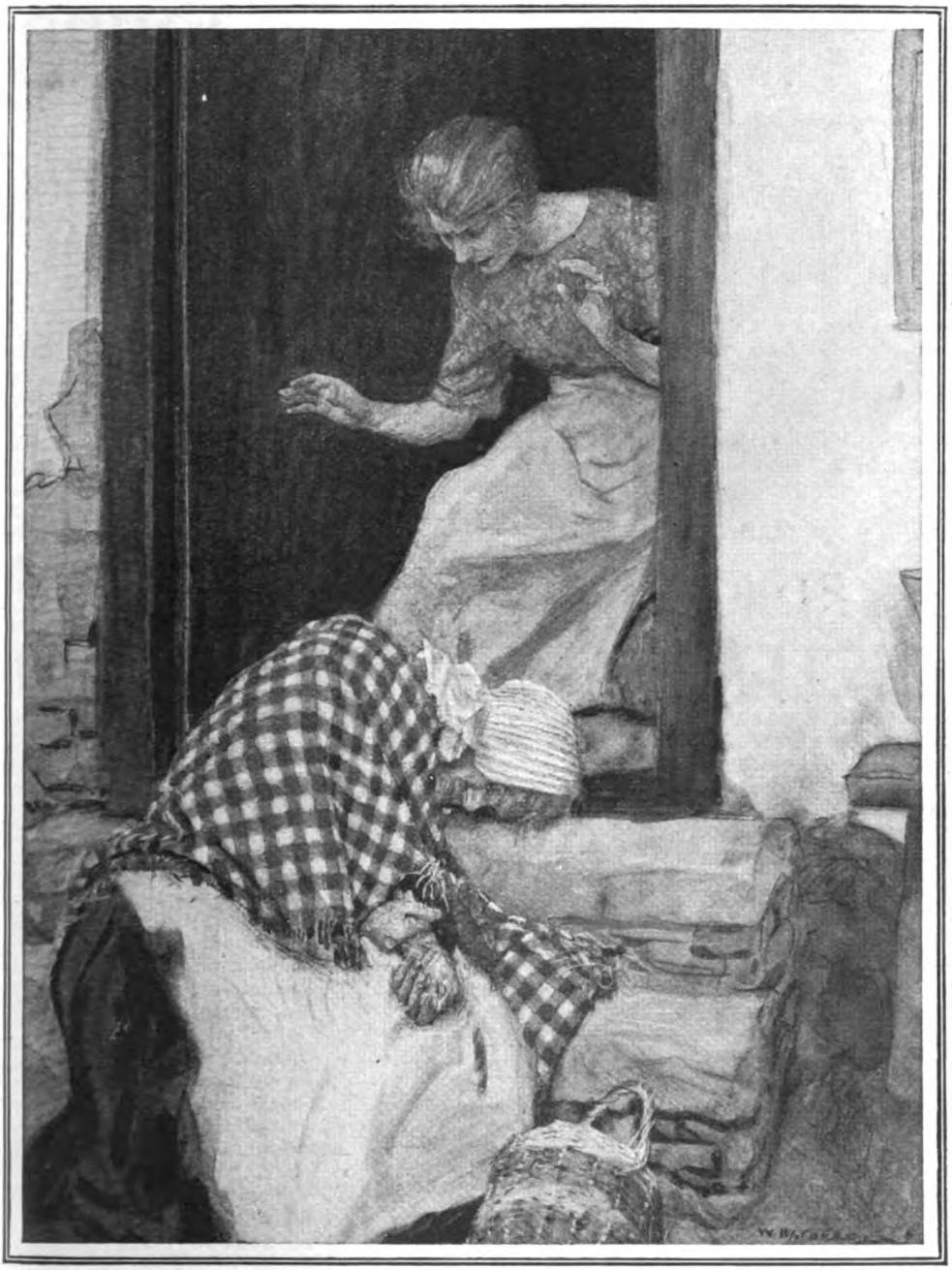
Grannie opened her eyes and looked up into Minnie's face.

"You will let me stay at home, won't you, Minnie? I can't go back. I'm rested now." She held up her twitching hands. "See, the bruises are all gone. I'm very strong. I walked the whole way home. You will let me stay, won't you?"

Minnie's voice choked. "Of course you must stay, Grannie. I need you. I can't get on alone. It's your house, and you can work as much as you like."

"May I do the house-cleaning, Minnie? May I?"

"Of course you may, if you want to."



"Jim! Jim!" she called. "It's Grannie. Look at her! Why, Jim, she must have walked."

She smiled through her tears. "The house needs you, too."

Grannie sat back and folded her hands.

"I'll begin on the attic to-morrow, Minnie. My herbs must be gone over before it's too late."

When I Was Young

A SERIES of ARTICLES by CELEBRITIES of TO-DAY describing HOW THEY VIEWED LIFE IN THEIR EARLY YEARS

No. 4

THE RT. HON. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN, P.C., M.P.

As we grow older, the memories of childhood become more precious to us. Little incidents which for some reason struck our childish imagination, and are therefore remembered when much of greater importance is forgotten, are lovingly recalled by us and repeated to our children. Some of these stories may in turn strike their imagination, and so again be remembered and in time recalled by them with pleasure and affection as they speak of their own childhood to our grandchildren. But what has all this got to do with the magazine reader of to-day? Let a century or so pass; then indeed everything is interesting, and our diaries, if we keep them and if, above all, we fill them with the trivialities of our daily lives, become the most fascinating of idle studies and sometimes, if we set down prices and betray rather than describe manners and customs, are the material of history. I have lately been reading "The Diary of a Country Parson, 1758–1781." What prodigious dinners this kindly gentleman gave and attended! How low was the cost of living compared with to-day's prices! How quaint sound his ejaculations—and his remedies! Thus, under date September 14th, 1768: "Great and many are the divisions in Castle Cary, and some almost irreconcilable. Send us Peace, O Lord! With Thee, O Lord, all things are possible."

Or again: "May 15, 1779. Bled my three Horses this morning, 2 quarts each."

And May 22nd of the same year: "My Boy Jack had another touch of the Ague about noon. I gave him a dram of gin at the beginning of the fit and pushed him headlong into one of my Ponds and ordered him to bed immediately and he was better after it and had nothing of the cold fit after but was very hot. . . ."

All this is delightful when it comes of a good old vintage and has lain in the cellars long enough to mellow and grow rare; but who wants to read about my infancy or my feelings on being promoted from short frocks to knickerbockers?

"Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir."

And yet there is a recollection or two of my early days that may have some interest as belonging to a world that has already passed away. I was born in a Unitarian family and brought up as a Unitarian. It was the custom in Birmingham that the older residents in a road should call on any new-comer, and I well remember the indignation with which I heard my father telling how one of our neighbours near the house to which he moved

after his second marriage, when I was about five years old, had taken the trouble to explain by letter that his failure to make the customary visit was due not to incivility but to his abhorrence of Unitarianism. My father was a little angry and a good deal amused. I was very angry and not at all amused, as indeed was fitting to my years.

Age 3.

Nor was this my only experience of similar narrowness of mind. The first two schools to which I was sent as a boarder were Unitarian schools, but when about thirteen years old I was sent to a preparatory school near Rugby which has long since ceased to exist. Here the master was a strong Churchman, but in quiet moments a not unkindly or uncharitable man. He accepted my father's conditions. I was to attend church with the rest of the school, but I was not to learn the Church Catechism or Creeds. To this arrangement he was scrupulously faithful, and he even took some pains to avoid marking the distinction between me and the other boys in a way that he thought might have made me uncomfortable; but when he lost his temper—and unfortunately he lost it rather easily—over some "howler" of mine in the Latin or Greek grammar, he would preface his objurgations and punishments by addressing me as "You little heretic!" Did this happen more than once, I wonder? In my memory it seems a not infrequent occurrence, but once would have been enough. How little I knew in those days of the difference between Unitarianism and Trinitarianism is shown by one of those childish recollections which have somehow remained in my memory as trivialities often do. I cannot exactly date the episode, but it must have been a little before the time of which I am speaking. I remember telling my elder sister that I thought I had discovered the difference between Unitarians and Churchmen: "We pray God to make us good, and they ask Him to forgive them for being bad." Evidently I had been taken to church, probably in my holidays at some seaside place where there was no Unitarian chapel, and had been impressed, perhaps also depressed, by the opening sentences of the Litany. Our religious instruction as children was quite undogmatic, and I certainly had no conception of the theological distinction between Unitarians and Trinitarians, but then and for long after I would cheerfully have joined any demonstration against the Church and disestablished and disendowed it a hundred times over. How much of the narrowness and bitterness with which we Nonconformists are often, and sometimes not unjustly, reproached is due to such incidents met by us in childhood or told in our hearing by our elders!

Age 7.

Jesse Collings, one of the first friends brought to my father by common political interests, and a delightful companion to his children, could occasionally be induced by much persuasion to tell stories of his own childhood in the Devon of eighty or ninety years ago — of his father's sturdy independence, of his mother's boast that even in the worst days their children had one good meal a day, of old Devon customs, of barn-dances to which they drove over the moor in some farmer's wagon, or of his elder brothers—one a sailor, another a stonemason and ten or fifteen years older than himself, for Jesse was the youngest of a long family. Tom, the stonemason, worked on the Rolle estate, but, alas! he became a Baptist, I think, though his father, with a fine disregard for minor distinctions and a very clear appreciation of immediate dangers, observed that

Age 12.

"No good would come of Tom's joining the Methodies." Sure enough, Tom was sent for to the estate office. "Is this true that I hear of you," asked the agent, "that you are preaching at Little Bethel?"

"Yes, sir."

"You know the rule of the estate, Tom. You must give it up or there is no more work for you."

"I know, sir, but I can't give it up."

"Then I'm sorry, Tom. I can give you no more work. It's the rule."

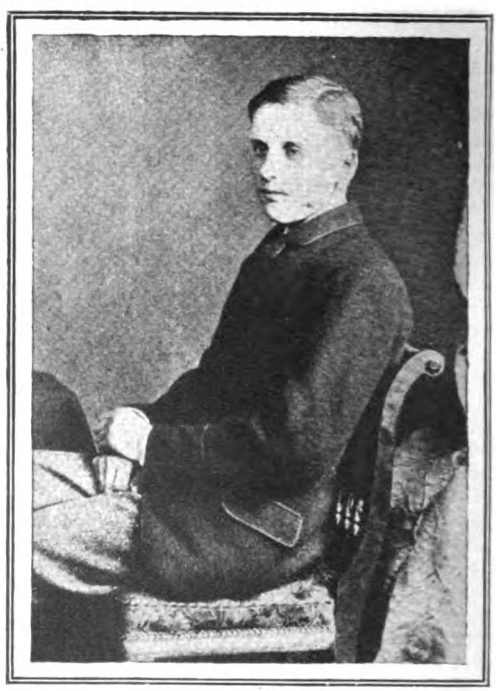
In his later days, at any rate, Collings used to tell the story without bitterness and with a kindly word for the agent: "He was a kind man and he didn't like it, but it was the rule of the estate, you know, in those days."

Such incidents and stories helped, I think, to make me a politician; certainly they helped to confirm me for a time in the strain of rather aggressive Radical nonconformity which was then predominant in Birmingham.

The older generation of Unitarians had felt differently. My great-grandfather, his father and his grandfather, stout Unitarians though they were, had all been churchwardens of St. Lawrence Jewry beside the Guildhall, and my father used to say that the only time that his father refused to help him in any cause in which he was interested was when he asked him for a subscription to the Disestablishment Society. "No," said my grandfather, "I am old enough to remember the time when the Churchmen were our best friends," and he recalled the fight over the Nonconformist Chapels Bill in 1844.

I have mentioned the first two schools to which I went. The first was at Brighton, kept by a kindly old lady, Miss Jane Smith. To it I was sent a little before I was eight years old, as much, I suspect, for the benefit of the sea-air and bathing as for such education as it afforded. Looking back on it, I think I was perfectly happy and very idle, and both the happiness and I dare say the idleness continued when I went three years later to Mrs. Case's school at Heath Brow, close to "Jack Straw's Castle" at Hampstead. Mrs. Case was the sister-in-law of George Dixon, then and for many years member for Birmingham. Her husband had been a master at University College School, and had opened this private school some years before his death. Mrs. Case, a very kindly, very charming old lady, continued the school, but did not herself teach. Most of the teaching was done by a Mr. Lavander, assisted by the elder Misses Case and by a lively Frenchman, who pinched our ears and tweaked our hair, and helped, with Marryat's novels, to make us feel that Frenchmen were still the natural enemies of Englishmen.

Mrs. Case's younger daughters and two or three other girls joined our classes, and sometimes shared our games, but a small garden and the Heath were our only



Age 17.

playgrounds, and neither cricket nor football occupied much of our playtime. Lavander had a good microscope, and I was given a small one, and then and for long after I spent a good deal of my time making microscopic slides or fishing for microscopic subjects in the ponds on Hampstead Heath and in the neighbourhood of home. I never developed a "Theory of Tittlebats," but I might without much difficulty have qualified for membership of the Pickwick Club with "Observations on Water-Fleas" or some such subject as my thesis.

It was in my last year at Hampstead that I have my first definite recollection of the late Lord Morley. I was between twelve and thirteen at the time, and my father took me to spend a week-end with Mr. and Mrs. Morley at Brighton, where they then lived. I think that I was a little awed by Morley, but Mrs. Morley set me at ease and won my heart at once. I can see myself sitting silent at the dinner-table as became my years, whilst Morley held forth on the advantages of co-education, and then, when dismissed

I think I was a little awed by Morley, but Mrs. Morley set me at ease and won my heart at once.

with Mrs. Morley to the drawing-room and encouraged by her, giving vent to my pent-up feelings. "He stood on the hearthrug," she afterwards told my people, "and harangued me. It was all very well, he said, for theorists like Mr. Morley, who didn't know, to talk in that way, but *he* knew. He had tried it and it didn't answer!" Fifty years later I am of the same opinion. It did not make for chivalry or even courtesy. The girls worked harder and did better than we did, and we disliked them for it without being stimulated to emulate their zeal.

I have known some of them in after life, but I have studiously refrained from asking what they thought of us at that time! My impression is that we were rather odious to them.

Rugby gave me my first real education, and to Rugby, and above all to my housemaster and dear friend Henry Lee Warner, I owe more than I can say. It had been steadily impressed upon me at my last preparatory school that I was very ignorant and very stupid, and that I should probably be ploughed in the entrance examination and bring my father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. I dare say that this made me work, but it also made me very miserable, for I accepted it as literal truth. I recall even now the effort I made to break the sad news to my father and to persuade him that if I failed it would be from inborn incapacity and not from idleness, and the despair that overtook me when I could wring no other answer from him than that I had plenty of brains if I chose to use them. What was

to be done with a father who had this maddening and hopelessly misplaced confidence in his offspring, and what would be his disappointment and his wrath when I failed? It was a rather gloomy couple of years that I spent at this school, but if life was not very happy I was well coached, and going up to Rugby within a month or two of my fifteenth birthday I passed into the Upper Middle I., or highest form in the Middle School—a fair, though not more than a fair, place to take at that age. There I stuck for a year, during which I was fag, required to sweep out my fag-master's study, trim his oil reading lamps, and occasionally run errands for others of the Sixth Form. I think it was a good system. There was no bullying by the fag-masters in my time and house, and they set themselves resolutely against bullying by anyone else. In my second term I got into a scrape which nearly brought a flogging on me and indirectly led to that close friendship with my house-master which has happily continued to this day. Next to my father and the influences of home, I owe more to him than to any man, and I always feel that he, with my father and, in later years, Arthur Balfour, is the true author of whatever public usefulness I have shown.

BUT to return to the Rugby story. There had, I think, been a Confirmation Service in chapel. For the rest of the day there were no lessons but also no games, so I and another new boy went a walk into the country. Just outside the town my companion challenged me to jump the hedge and ditch bordering the road, and for a little time the game went on merrily till a butcher-boy, passing in his cart, shouted to us, "You'll jump presently! Here's the bailiff coming with a cart-whip!" One glance at the advancing bailiff, a hasty jump back into the road, and we ran as hard as we could go till we reached the cross-roads some way farther on. Then, looking back, we could see no sign of our pursuer, who appeared to have given up the chase, and we turned off along one of the cross-roads, congratulating ourselves on our escape. But our rejoicings were premature. Suddenly we heard a thud, thud, close behind us on the grass at the road-side, and the next moment the bailiff was upon us. He had watched from afar our choice of route, and then pursued us on his cob. We gave our names and waited in suspense for what might follow. Unfortunately for us, some trouble of the same kind had occurred a little before, though we knew nothing of it, and the head master took a grave view of our offence. It appeared that the fields on which we had trespassed were part of a stud-farm. The owner had complained that not only were the fences broken down but the brood-mares were disturbed, and satisfaction was demanded. The head master, Dr. Jex-Blake, afterwards Dean of Wells, rightly felt the importance of maintaining good relations with the neighbouring landowners and farmers, without whose goodwill the school paper-chases and house runs would have been impossible. He had issued shortly before a series of "Rules for Country Walks and Paper-Chases," of which we were blissfully ignorant, and every one of which we appeared to have broken.

We were summoned to his study, where he addressed us on the selfishness of our conduct, on our breach of rules, and on the risk the whole school ran of losing its privileges through our thoughtlessness and disobedience. He even went so far as to attribute to our conduct that "blackguardism" which a few years later Mr. Gladstone discovered in the Act of Union, and he announced that we should be flogged. Now flogging was very rare at Rugby—I can recall only one instance in my four years—and reserved for moral offences like lying. It would therefore have been not only a punishment but a disgrace. Whether he ever really intended to execute this sentence I do not know; I am now inclined to think not, but his difficulty was that the last offenders had been handed over to the Sixth Form of their house for punishment as being guilty of an anti-social crime—an offence against their fellows—rather than a mere defiance of authority or breach of rules, and had been "Sixth-licked," in the language of my day, or, in other words, caned by the Sixth Form members of their house. As we had repeated the offence, ignorant as we might be of previous happenings, the head master felt, I think, that an example must be made for the public good, and we were accordingly promised a flogging.

Now I suppose (though I have not sought to verify the dates) that all this occurred just about or very shortly after the time when my father led the Radical revolt in the House of Commons against flogging in the Army, which secured first its restriction and, soon after, its abolition. Whether from a knowledge of my father's views or for reasons of his own I know not, but in any case my house-master intervened and the punishment was commuted to the loss of two days of our holidays. I spent those days riding with my house-master. These were the first of many such rides, for I was never any good at games, and in particular hated cricket, for which my single and short-sighted eye entirely unfitted me, so that I never played the game after I ceased to be "fagged" for it, and for the rest of my time at school I rode with my house-master

on one half-holiday in the week. My father's views were expressed at the time of my school escapade in the following letter to my house-master, of which I only learned long afterwards—and, very characteristically, even then not from him.

Private.

Southbourne,
Augustus Road,
Edgbaston,
April 8th, 1879.

My dear Sir,

From a letter just received from Austen, I learn that I am more indebted to you than I knew, since it appears that your kind influence has saved my son from a flogging.

I knew that this brutal punishment was still in vogue at our public schools, after having almost disappeared from the Army and Navy, and being reserved in our jails for outrages of a particularly savage character, but it never entered my head that it would be applied for any but the worst offences, as for lying, stealing, or indecency.

Accordingly, as I believed my boy could not be guilty of such things, I did not suppose that he incurred any liability to a punishment against which my blood revolts, and of which, if it is to be incurred for a simple neglect of rules, a mere thoughtless boy's lark, I cannot think without disgust and indignation.

It is this kind of treatment which destroys all sense of proportion in a boy's notion of offences, making gross immorality no worse than some slight breach of discipline; while the ready appeal to physical force is a natural preparation for the rowdy Jingoism which is the characteristic of many educated middle-class Englishmen.

I have written thus far in the hope that you will agree generally with my feeling in this matter. In any case, I do not intend to have my son flogged for trivial offences, and I must therefore beg of you, if unfortunately he should be sentenced to such a punishment by the head master, to let me know in order that I may at once remove him from the school.

I should deeply regret to take this step, and especially to take him away from your house, where he is very happy, but I can't stand the notion that a boy, whose general conduct and intentions are good, should be treated like a garrotter because, boy-like, he leaps over a paling into forbidden ground.

Surely a deprivation of holiday or a heavy imposition is penalty sufficient and appropriate for such faults, without resorting to torture or degradation.

Again thanking you sincerely for your intervention and regretting that it should have entailed a curtailment of your own holiday,

I am,
Yours very faithfully,
(Signed) J. CHAMBERLAIN.

Age 21.

Age 19.

I have often wondered since whether, if I had been flogged then, I should have regarded that form of punishment for others with the favour or indifference which is common among public school-men. As it is, I have a horror of it. I once voted in favour of its application to men convicted of peculiarly brutal conduct to women, but on the only occasion when, acting for the Home

Secretary, I had to decide whether a particular sentence of flogging should be carried out, I could not bring myself to sanction it.

The Sixth Form at Rugby in those days had authority to cane, though it was seldom used. A few strokes with the cane might occasionally be given by an individual Sixth Form fellow, or a "Sixth licking" be adjudged by the whole Sixth Form of the house, each in turn giving so many strokes with the cane to the delinquent. I remember only one such case in my time and house, and that was in my first term. The victim was one of the bigger boys, and I think that we juniors were rather glad, though we took care not to say so. I cannot remember ever caning any fellow myself, though years afterwards, at a Queen's Birthday party at the Admiralty, one of the Naval Attachés asked me why the present Lord Goschen, then Private Secretary to his father, the First Lord, was not present, and when I professed ignorance, exclaimed, "I know! You haf beaten him again! O, he haf told me. He was—how you say?—your fag at college."

After my year in the Upper Middle I.—where the form-master was Moberley, the author of our school song, Floreat Rugbeia—I passed into the division of the Lower Fifth which was taken by my house-master. Here in the Upper School I was neither fag nor fag-master, and here I got my first real start. Up to and including the Lower Fifth the forms ran in parallel divisions. Above it there was one division only, and promotion out of the Lower Fifth was therefore at about only half the rate of entry into it. But Lee Warner was not only a good disciplinarian; he had the gift of making lessons interesting. I still remember with delight his teaching of English history, illustrated by Shakespeare's plays, and in his hands even the dead languages came momentarily to life, in contrast to the success of some other masters I have sat under who could and did make even a living language dead. I was only in his form for one term; then I rested a couple of terms in the rather slack atmosphere of the Upper Fifth, spent one term in the XX under that fine scholar and great master, "Bobby" Whitelaw, and then found myself in the Sixth Form, with another five terms of school life in front of me before I went up to Cambridge.

I DO not think that I read much for myself in my early boyhood, though it was the custom of our elders to read aloud to us children after our midday dinner, while we were expected to occupy our hands with knitting or netting, or such-like tasks. In this way we got to know Grimm and Hans Andersen, "The Arabian Nights," and "Gulliver's Travels," and later most of Scott and the best of Dickens. Nor were we spared Miss Edgeworth. Then I recall vaguely two books in my grandfather's library that charmed our childhood: "Jack o' the Mill" and "The Old Shikhari." Ballantyne's stories were a joy, and Jules Verne's, especially his "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea," which fired my imagination as few stories have done before or since. Kingsley's "Heroes" left me cold—they were not real to me—and Plutarch's "Lives" spoiled one holiday when my father protested that I must not read only trash, and took me into his library to find something better. Long afterwards he happened to say that he had never cared for them himself. "Then why, oh, why did you inflict them on my boyhood?" I not unnaturally asked. His answer was very characteristic of him. "Well," he said, "I observed that all great men delighted in them in their youth, so I supposed that it was my fault that I had not liked them, and that you would enjoy them."

Of good poetry, too, we were made to learn some, and much more was read to us; but when I chose my own reading, it was generally natural history or travels. Waterton and Bates, Bruce and Baker were all favourites. Indeed, then and long afterwards, the career of the late Lord Avebury, Sir John Lubbock as he then was, was my model, and my ambition was to be like him—a member of Parliament and a naturalist. It was only in my last two years at Rugby that history became an absorbing study, especially the eighteenth century, which at one time I knew well, and that I began really to read the English poets—Byron was my favourite—and essayists, and to broaden my acquaintance with the English novel. But when exactly I first fell under Thackeray's magic spell or discovered that, though I could neither speak French nor understand it when spoken, I could read "Les Trois Mousquetaires" or "La Reine Margot" with pleasure, I cannot now remember. But in my boyhood, and indeed long afterwards, I learned much more from good talk in the home circle or elsewhere than from any books. Talk at my father's table was always good and richly varied, ranging over a wide variety of subjects, though no doubt politics were its staple. He himself always gave of his best, and he encouraged his children then and always to talk of things we knew or cared about, only breaking off the conversation when it degenerated into an argument without an end, because we had all got beyond our depth.

In my time at Rugby there was no Modern Side. Greek was as obligatory as Latin, and in the Upper School and Sixth German was an alternative to Science and

taught at the same hours, so that no fellow could take both. I begged for Science, but my father wished me to learn German, and his wish prevailed, at least so far as attendance at German classes went, for as to learning German, that was not accomplished till I went to Berlin a couple of years after leaving college. Of Natural Science, therefore, in any of its branches, I learned not even the rudiments—a defect which, alas! I have never made good. Is it possible, O defenders of the Classics, for anyone in these days to claim that he has had a liberal education when he is left in such abysmal ignorance of the whole natural world about him? In my own case, certainly, my classical education was a failure. I loathed the hours wasted on making deplorably bad Latin verses; I never could make a Greek verse of any kind, good, bad, or indifferent, and was happily rescued from the necessity by my house-master, who persuaded the head master to let me read history and English literature instead. I never attained to any facility in reading Latin or Greek, and cheerfully put away all my classical authors as soon as I had passed the Little-Go—only to find when, a good many years later, I opened them again that I had totally forgotten even the little which I once knew, and that henceforth I must "read my Homer in the prose of Bohn."

And so I grumble, and my dear Lee Warner, if he chances to read this article in his Norfolk home, will say that I am an ungrateful dog, and he will be right. The *instruction* that the Rugby of 1878-82 offered may be below the standards of to-day, but the school life was an education, and a good one, in the best sense of the word. "In France," a young Frenchman, who had been studying our English schools, said to me a few years later, "we have a superior instruction but no education. English boys seem to me to know very little, *but your education is incomparable.*"

I am reminded of another comparison. "Would you advise me," my father once asked a member of the House of Commons, who was considered in his day an authority on education, "to send my son to an English public school or to Germany?" "My dear Chamberlain," said this gentleman, "you could not have put the question to anyone better qualified to advise you, for I sent one son to Eton and another to Germany. My Eton boy's ignorance is deplorable, but he is a perfect gentleman and his manners are a constant delight to his mother and me. Now my German boy, on the other hand, positively astonishes me by the extent of his knowledge, but he's a horrid cad!"

After all, there is much in the Wykehamist motto:—

"MANNERS MAKYTH MAN,"

and in our old age our public schools retain not only our affection but our gratitude.

Next month's contribution to this series will be by Mr. G. K. Chesterton.

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 140.

Two writers, hailing from the U.S.A.,
Who flourished at no very distant day.

1. The fickle multitude we here contract;
   One letter change, the nut may then be cracked.
2. Hinting that skill and merit are but slight,
   We name a dexterous toxophilite.
3. A town names lonely monarch. Write instead
   His name transferred to fiction; now behead.
4. Unhappy man, unhappier than most,
   His wife, when dead, did not give up the ghost.
5. Whom no man ever saw we here present,
   One after reconstruction affluent.
6. Witless, indeed, his father was, but he
   Sagacity displayed in marked degree.
7. Of contest think, of battlefield, of course,
   Of quadruped—no, do not think of horse.
8. The law is most severe on lady great—
   The criminal we here decapitate.
9. Three men there were. Now, to describe the third,
   An isle and county mix, and get our word.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 140 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on March 12th.*

Two answers may be sent to every light.

It is essential that solvers, with their answers to this acrostic, should send also their real names and addresses.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 139.

(The Third of the Series.)

CUP final, Ascot, Henley, many more,
By all of them are shadows cast before.

1. Monarch who failed to keep the waters back
   Gives us within his name a nut to crack.
2. From eight one letter goes, and here we seek
   The other five. What ends on this day week?
3. Death stands beside the water, and one may
   See the race end here on some future day.
4. Terrible, truly merciless, although
   Romantic when connected with a hoe.
5. What breaks but does not fall we do not take.
   We need the one that fall's but does not break.
6. A dozen take, take it a dozen times;
   The doctor will provide a word that rhymes.

PAX.

1. C	anut	E
2. O	cta	V
3. M	ortlak	E
4. I	va	N
5. N	igh	T
6. G	ros	S

NOTES.—Proem. Coming events their shadows cast before. Light 1. A nut, within. 2. Octave. 3. Mortlake. The 'Varsity boat race ends at Mortlake. 4. Ivan the Terrible; Ivanhoe. 5. Day and night. 6. Dose.

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose a stamped addressed envelope, and he will endeavour to reply.

The Pretty

by W. H. WILLIAMSON

MAISIE TELVER lived with her mother, the austere widow of a stern colonel, and with an austere aunt. Mrs. Telver's sister, Miss Gallibridge, was by no means negligible. At the death of the colonel, Aunt Tabitha came to live with her sister in one of those houses in Albert Road that face Regent's Park and the canal. Between mother and aunt Maisie was shown the strait and narrow path that led to St. Mark's Church, shops, visits, occasional theatres, calls, and other things of a like nature.

Maisie was now twenty-two, very pretty—hair nearly raven, deep blue eyes, an ivory skin, and a mouth that tied a man's into a knot. "The pretty Puritan," Mrs. Yeniken had called her, and the name had stuck. With mother's and auntie's Everest-like austerity to enthrone and freeze it, there was no wonder that it stuck.

"The pretty Puritan," Maisie, would sit in a chair and dream.

"What are you reading, dear?" mother would ask.

"'The Way of an Eagle,' mother."

Mother would look at aunt, aunt would look at mother. Was that really the kind of novel a pretty Puritan, a gentle, shy, retiring maid, ought to read? Aunt's mouth would slowly do its circus tricks. Mother's shoulders would play at getting away from corsets, and *perhaps* Maisie might be allowed to read about strong, silent men and heroes who suffered in silence, heroines who hated, wept, loved, and that sort of thing.

But the programme for the Puritan was most preciously prepared. Mother and aunt did not believe in romance; they were womanly and practical. They believed in marriage and husbands, and "many a young girl has thrown away her chances"—you can hear Aunt Tabitha's voice on the compelling theme.

One doesn't really wonder that Maisie now and again dreamed dreams she would not have told her mother or aunt for a king's ransom.

Regent's Park can be thrilling. Maisie could hear the wolves howling as she lay in bed at night and fancy herself in a sledge with someone (like the strong, silent man in "The Way of an Eagle," say) driving madly while the wolves pursued them. And he would whisper, "Be brave, darling." And she would whisper, "I am brave, darling," trembling almost enough to upset the sledge. Or the lions roared and she was in the desert (just having left "The Garden of Allah," probably on a gentle excursion—unconducted), with him by her side, of course. She could see him taking aim—she could see the lion—she could see nothing till she felt his arms round her and he murmured "All's well, dearest," and then

PURITAN

ILLUSTRATED BY E. F. SHERIE

she flung her arms round him—and woke up! A canal running through grassy banks, overhanging trees; a park; wild animals—these were across the road. And in the house were mother and auntie.

Maisie "across the road" and Maisie as the "pretty Puritan" were on familiar terms, but there was a difference.

One day Aunt Tabitha fell ill, and as mother attended to her it fell to Maisie's lot to take a little stroll alone. She had a commission: something had gone wrong with the bath-room tap and Maisie was asked to call and tell the plumber to come and attend to it.

The "pretty Puritan," loosed from her jailers so to speak, got "across the road." She meant to be herself to-day. She would really walk where she wanted, look at the bears on the Mappin terraces, see adventure from a distance.

Maisie, as she walked, felt the thrill of adventure. It is no good pointing out that a walk through a park is not an adventure; everything is the lych-gate to adventure if only the spirit is there.

At Baker Street she stood and wondered. She was gazing on life as it is passed without the everlasting company or comment of someone else (particularly someone austere). She was free to linger and imagine. She looked at what she liked for just as long as she liked. Her imaginings were wonderful and her sympathies profound.

She couldn't resist it: she jumped on a bus—on the top, too. She would ride into adventure. By a stroke of luck she had her purse with her (and hadn't had it stolen so far), and said with a recklessness that made her a most desperate rebel, "Piccadilly Circus."

When she had to get down the whirl and swirl of the traffic thrilled her. Of course, she came here with mother and Aunt Tabitha, but then they both looked after her, both gave orders which way to go (sometimes quite different, which was terror-striking), and then explained what a terrible mess she would have been in if it hadn't been for *them!*

And here she was alone, on the island where the Shaftesbury fountain plays, and she had to cross that string of trenches and no man's land all by herself.

Well, if mother and Aunt Tabitha could do it she could. And she did. She was in no hurry. She waited till the barrage had ceased before she went over the top. Her cheeks were delicious when she stood at the entrance to Piccadilly Tube Station and looked about her, thinking what a truly

wonderful creature she was and it was time she had shown her quality.

As she gazed about her she noticed she was by no means alone at that station mouth. By no means. Quite a number of ladies, some almost as old as Aunt Tabitha, seemed to have dashed out on their own on this pleasant afternoon and made for Piccadilly Circus, on a voyage of adventure.

Maisie saw them, however, disappear. A gentleman would come up, faces would smile (on one or two occasions lips met), and off one of the ladies would go. Delicious.

"If only that would happen to me," thought Maisie. (In a vague way she was saying to herself: "That's life; that's the stuff I want.")

And at that moment a gentleman stood before her and said, as he raised his hat, "Excuse me, didn't I see you at Wembley the other day?"

Maisie had been to Wembley. Oh! He didn't look a very nice man. Had she really met him at Wembley?

"I don't remember," she said, sweetly, her heart beating faster.

"Mixed grill weather, isn't it?" he said, looking at her curiously.

Maisie was not so stupid as not to see through *him*.

"Mixed grill," she repeated, and then, with a tinge of haughtiness, "I expect you want the Criterion bar," and her chin gradually rose as she spoke, and her back faced him.

He looked awkward. He assumed the "Sorry-I-spoke" air, for there were other people about, and they are observant, as a rule, at Piccadilly Circus. With a touch of the hat he turned and disappeared.

MAISIE was thrilled. She was also a little fearsome. It was an adventure all the same. She knew such things happened. What fun! That was what men did—they came and spoke to one. Mother and Aunt Tabitha would hold up their hands at the tale (not that they were going to hear it, but hypothetically or at a similar tale with a note that "none of the characters in the story were taken from real life"). Yet Maisie had to confess to herself there was no great harm done. The man had spoken, she had snubbed him—had she snubbed him? At any rate, he went away. It was gorgeous at Piccadilly Circus.

"Excuse me." A good-looking young man stood before her, with his hat in his hand. She looked at him. He was certainly much nicer than the other man, but he would have to be snubbed too. "I say, are you a sport?" he said.

Are you a sport? Well! She looked inclined to the haughty and to the merry. This was different from the Wembley touch. But what a question! And a stranger, too.

She said nothing, but merely drew herself in and up. It is a defensive attitude. Anything may happen. It is non-committal.

"Do be a sport," said the young man, persuasively if not meekly.

"What is it?" she muttered, sympathizing somehow and weakly giving the keys of the castle away.

"Topping! Two friends of mine over there bet me you'd—er—you know, turn me down if I spoke."

"Perhaps they took me for a lady," she ventured.

"That's one in the midriff." He laughed pleasantly if easily. "And none more than I," he said, quietly, stabbing her beautifully.

"That's why you came and spoke to me?" she suggested.

"I couldn't help it. I—er—I saw you. We all saw you. I wondered if you were waiting for somebody, and then I saw that bounder come and speak to you. My friends dared me——"

"Where are they?"

He pointed out two well-dressed young men, good-looking and genial.

Maisie turned her back on them quickly, having caught their eyes.

"Oh!" She swallowed. "Those are your friends, eh?"

"Yes."

"What did they dare you to do?"

"I said I'd like to—speak to you."

"You're not altogether without nerve, are you?"

"More than ever do I thank the gods that I am not," he answered, fervently.

She looked at him, swallowed something, and then said hurriedly, as if she were covering up a little pleasure:—

"That's one for me in the midship—or——"

He laughed. He had a pleasant laugh.

"They said you wouldn't," he went on. "I resolved to put it to the test. 'He either fears his fate too much'—you know. I guessed you were a sport. I felt somehow if I appealed to your sporting sense I should win."

"And all you thought of was the win?"

"Yes."

She drew herself in and up again.

"We had two bets," he said.

She felt there was more in this young man than was to be gathered at a casual glance.

"One was that you would snub me; the other was——"

"Well?"

"That I should wish you had."

She bit her lip and smiled.

"I've won them both," he went on, quietly.

"Have you?"

"Up till now." He was looking at her with a certain emphasis.

For a Puritan she withstood his gaze very well.

"And, having won both your bets, hadn't you better go?"

He hesitated.

"Of course I won't intrude, but—is it—necessary?"

"Absolutely."

"At once?"

"Why not?"

"I'm awfully sorry—are you waiting for someone?"

"N-no."

His look expressed relief.

A good-looking young man stood before her, with his hat in his hand. "I say, are you a sport?" he said.

"Then——"

"Does that make any difference?" she asked.

"You alone—here—can't I take you somewhere—be a sort of watch-dog?"

"I must go home," she said, suddenly realizing she had had quite a good measure of adventure and that it would be folly to risk the success of the voyage by dallying too long—even if the harbour were pleasant.

He had really nice instincts, and he would have been lacking in many desirable qualities if he had not noticed keenly and memorably those deep blue eyes with their long lashes and that adorable mouth—that positively adorable mouth.

"Mayn't I?" He had a diffident *cum* pleading air. He had lost (if he had had it at all) the stamp of the casual picker-up; he was admiring, gentlemanly, almost knightly. "Mayn't I see you home?"

"Your friends—your betting friends?" she said, with a hint of Dresden roguery in her voice.

"They've lost," he said with a laugh.

There was the flicker of a pause. She looked at him and quickly away. What nice brown eyes he had!

"I must go," she said.

He looked pitiful, desiring and delicate. The cave man seems out of place at Piccadilly Circus.

"I think I'll take a bus. I want to get——" She stopped and pointed towards Regent Street. "There."

He beamed.

"I'll pilot you, if I may."

She suddenly pulled a face.

"I'm late," she said.

"Would you rather have a taxi?"

"No." She almost shouted that. They were moving now to cross the Circus. Taxis were not made for Puritans, so somehow she had gleaned, though she naturally went in them with mother and Aunt Tabitha. This was a bit of her own gleaning and showed a certain sense of realities. "I'm horribly late," she added.

He took her arm. He couldn't help it. A bus and a taxi seemed to have designs on her, but he dodged them. He ran her through and laughed.

"Near shave that," he said.

HER cheeks were roses. Gorgeous! Real adventure. And he had her arm still. She didn't want to drag hers away. Suppose they were seen! And he was really nice: they reached the sidewalk and he dropped her arm.

"What bus?" he asked.

"Camden Town—three or fifty-nine."

"May I?" He was diffidence itself.

"No, no," she said. "And thank you." She was smiling almost gratefully; the adventure had been an enormous success. Suddenly, almost as the bus came round the corner, she remembered the plumber.

"Oh!"

"What is it?"

"I've forgotten something."

"Can I do it?"

She wondered. She was late. She would be later still. What could she say?

"Let me do it. I'll be only too delighted."

"I had to call at the plumber's."

"Tell me all about it."

"Here's the bus."

"I'll come with you."

She muttered a "Thank you," and he flew up. It was like a ride in Paradise. He could imagine Peter or Leonidas or Boadicea perhaps at the wheel driving through Jasper Gate into the Elysian fields.

"If we see anybody I know," she said, "I'll nudge you and you can pretend—you understand?"

"Certainly. Nudge me and I'll cut you dead, cut you off with less than the usual shilling."

She bit her lip and looked round nervously. She was enjoying herself as much as obvious tremors would allow.

"*Re* plumber?" he said, as he sat beside her and the bus moved on.

"Oh, yes. Could you do it?"

"Of course."

So she told him where the plumber lived, and then she had to tell him where the plumber must go to mend the tap. I, who tell this story, ought to know what was in the pretty Puritan's mind, but, candidly, I don't. Now and again a Maisie Telver beats me to darkness. At first I should have said, "She was in a desperate hurry and took the way out of the difficulty that suggested itself." But on reflection I refuse to dogmatize. If any of you knew a dusky beauty, with that gentle, alluring, trusting, delicate air, you may understand. I shouldn't dream of blaming you if you don't. The young man on the bus swallowed it. He believed he was a knight-errant. He was doing a lady good service. And he was delighted to get the name and address—Mrs. Telver, 54, Albert Road.

The parting was neat. She walked off that bus as if she had never known him. She was the precious Puritan, with all that there is of the most demure about her. And he, true to his word, went off in the opposite direction—down Park Street, if

you would be precisely informed—as if he had no picture of a blue-eyed maiden in his heart, to call on a plumber.

Incidentally he muttered to himself, "Miss Telver, 54, Albert Road." What luck, he thought. Yes, many a bright-eyed lady hasn't had half the wit of the demure Maisie and has wondered afterwards why she never saw him again.

"You've been rather long, dear. Did you tell the plumber?" said mother.

"He's coming to-morrow," Maisie replied.

"Oh! To-morrow. Where did you go?"

"Just a little stroll in the park."

"Oh! Did you meet anybody?"

"There were a lot of people about," said Maisie, indifferently.

"Of course. The park is very pretty just now, isn't it?"

"Lovely. How's Aunt Tabitha?"

"I think she's slightly better.

"I'm glad."

THE next morning Mrs. Telver was informed that the plumber had arrived.

"Show him the tap, Maisie dear," said Mrs. Telver.

Maisie had the shock of her life. There was yesterday's cavalier with a bag of tools, a scarf round his neck, and some sort of ill-fitting overall.

For a moment Maisie forgot where the bath-room was. She swayed. But these pretty Puritans have a wonderful way of pulling themselves together.

As she gazed he winked. That reassured her.

"This way, please," she said.

He followed her like a plumber.

In the bath-room she looked round and listened. Then she looked at him with questioning, challenging eyes.

"This is the tap, is it, miss?" Then, in a whisper, "The chap couldn't come to-day—he'll be here to-morrow morning. I had to let you know. He's all right. I've squared him."

She didn't know what to say. She just nodded and mumbled, "Thank you. It is good of you."

"Not a bit." Then, loudly, "I see what it is. It wants—h'm! Somebody will have to call to-morrow. He'll be here early, miss."

"Thank you very much."

He looked at her boldly. She was grateful, admiring, moved. Discerning that attitude, he ventured to touch her hand as they turned to go out of the bath-room.

At the door he looked round and very deftly managed to hold out a visiting card, which she took. She thought it *might* have something to do with the tap.

MR. REGINALD F. GREYSON.
Culloden,
Fellowes Road,
Hampstead.

Oxford & Cambridge Club.

She looked at him again. The decisive instants were disturbing. What was his card to her? Or she to him? His eyes were pleading.

So she slipped the card in her handkerchief, being the only place at that moment she could think of that was both concealing and decorous.

He went out like a plumber.

She returned to mother like a Puritan.

"Has he done it already?" asked Mrs. Telver.

"No. He's coming to-morrow to finish—at least, somebody will."

"But he's been there no time."

"I think he hadn't the washer, or whatever it is, and he couldn't come again to-day."

"How tiresome!"

And when Maisie was in her room she looked at that card. Mr. Reginald F. Greyson. What a wonderful thing to do! To come dressed as a plumber. She sighed. He was a gentleman. He lived in Fellowes Road and was a member of the Oxford and Cambridge Club. She wondered at first if he had been to *both* universities, he seemed so very clever.

And for many days Maisie thought of Reginald F. Greyson who lived in Fellowes Road.

She could write to him, but he could not write to her. The idea came to her, as that kind of idea will come to pretty Puritans if they are something like Maisie Telver.

Yes, she could write. All the same, it wasn't so easy as it sounded. It was easy enough to write a letter and post it, but who could guarantee that no eyes save those handsome brown ones belonging to Mr. Reginald F. Greyson would see it? All sorts of things happened with letters: they went astray, they were dropped and read by other people. Perhaps the recipient was ill and the doctor and the nurse and father and mother of the sick man read them. No. One must be very careful in writing letters.

And yet with a nature like Maisie's the difficulties of writing letters are got over. Mr. Reginald F. Greyson had made an impression on her. The affair had been

thrilling enough even without the plumbing episode; but that had crowned the edifice, that had given the extra kick to the incident which lifted it into the rare and lovely.

If he could have written she would have let him; it looks so much better. But since he couldn't, then she must do it. She persuaded herself it was her duty.

What she felt was: I keep thinking about him all day and part of the night. I want to see him again very much. I *must* see him again.

This is what she wrote:—

Dear Mr. Greyson,—

I don't think I thanked you for your kindness and thoughtfulness. It was very good of you to call as you did, and I am very grateful. You will understand that I can't receive any letters, and it is difficult to thank you personally, that is why I am writing. I do occasionally stroll in the park, but only rarely, and I am unfortunately never sure when. If anybody should be with me of course you would be very discreet.

Yours sincerely,

MAISIE TELVER.

The posting of the letter was something of an ordeal, for there were the multitudinous things that might happen if that letter got in any way into the hands of Maisie's mother or her Aunt Tabitha. Suppose a motor, for instance, ran into the pillar-box and smashed it and the letters got spread—and read—and delivered to the addresses from which they had been sent? Maisie hadn't thought of that particular calamity before, but it occurred to her the moment she had dropped the letter in the box. If she had lingered much longer ideas of other, and maybe even more dreadful, calamities might have occurred to her.

The posting of that letter was an adventure. The writing had been no small affair either. And now followed the waiting and hoping and dodging and walking.

Naturally Reginald F. Greyson was feeling the situation. A pair of deep blue eyes, a mass of raven hair, and a voice that ran through you like an angel playing on a harp could not be expected to leave a young, impressionable young man as he was. Reginald was completely ensnared, and knew it. He was ready to do and dare and all that sort of thing, but found some difficulty in deciding what the doing and the daring should be. Ladies were disturbing and upsetting enough even when you met them easily and without parental dread; they could tongue-tie you with an attitude. But if they were guarded and you had to be discreet?

So Reginald dreamed and plotted and walked round and up and down Albert Road till the lamp-posts seemed old friends—and not fat enough when he thought he was observed.

For a young barrister, who had been dared into a risky situation and thence into the domain of dulcamara, he was a most pathetic figure. But the letter stirred him. He almost danced when he read it. According to present-day notions of dancing it is probably what he did do. He certainly kissed the letter. And, as it happened to be the Long Vacation, he walked in Regent's Park.

MAISIE had managed it again. She was going to a shop in Park Street through Regent's Park. Absurd. Naturally. It is like going from London to Paris through Chicago. But people in a certain state or condition are reported to behave in that sort of way.

Maisie had crossed the bridge over the canal, looked into the green suggestive water with a stirred imagination, for it always fascinated her, and then turned into the enclosure that runs from the road and slopes to the water's edge.

Suddenly she was accosted by a small boy, who was in workmanlike turned-up sleeves, turned-up trousers (there wasn't much more to turn up), and bare feet and legs.

"Len's yer umbrella, lidy."

Maisie looked at the alert, bright-eyed, dirty-faced boy who asked for her umbrella. Lend him her umbrella? What on earth for? Before she could speak the boy resumed.

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The Adventure of The Illustrious Client

A New SHERLOCK HOLMES Story

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

SYNOPSIS OF PART I.

The Illustrious Client on whose behalf Sherlock Holmes is consulted is anxious to prevent the marriage of the young, rich, and beautiful Miss Violet de Merville to Baron Gruner, an unscrupulous adventurer. Gruner has told her every scandal of his past life, but in such a way as to make himself out to be an innocent martyr. She absolutely accepts his version, and will listen to no other.

Sherlock Holmes interviews the Baron, who warns him of the risk he is running in interfering in his affairs. He then visits Miss de Merville in company with a Miss Winter, one of the Baron's many victims, in the hope that her story may induce the infatuated girl to change her mind. But all to no purpose.

"So now you know exactly how we stand," said Sherlock Holmes, finally, "and it is clear that I must plan some fresh opening move, for this gambit won't work. I'll keep in touch with you, Watson . . . though it is just possible that the next move may lie with them rather than with us."

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PART II.

I THINK I stood stunned for some moments. Then I have a confused recollection of snatching at a paper, of the remonstrance of the man whom I had not paid, and, finally, of standing in the doorway of a chemist's shop while I turned up the fateful paragraph. This was how it ran :—

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I need not say that my eyes had hardly glanced over the paragraph before I had sprung into a hansom and was on my way to Baker Street. I found Sir Leslie Oakshott, the famous surgeon, in the hall and his brougham waiting at the kerb.

"No immediate danger," was his report. "Two lacerated scalp wounds and some considerable bruises. Several stitches have

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thrilling enough even without the plumbing episode; but that had crowned the edifice, that had given the extra kick to the incident which lifted it into the rare and lovely.

If he could have written she would have let him; it looks so much better. But since he couldn't, then she must do it. She persuaded herself it was her duty.

What she felt was: I keep thinking about him all day and part of the night. I want to see him again very much. I *must* see him again.

This is what she wrote:—

Dear Mr. Greyson,—

I don't think I thanked you for your kindness and thoughtfulness. It was very good of you to call as you did, and I am very grateful. You will understand that I can't receive any letters, and it is difficult to thank you personally, that is why I am writing. I do occasionally stroll in the park, but only rarely, and I am unfortunately never sure when. If anybody should be with me of course you would be very discreet.

Yours sincerely,
MAISIE TELVER.

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been necessary. Morphine has been injected and quiet is essential, but an interview of a few minutes would not be absolutely forbidden."

With this permission I stole into the darkened room. The sufferer was wide awake, and I heard my name in a hoarse whisper. The blind was three-quarters down, but one ray of sunlight slanted through and struck the bandaged head of the injured man. A crimson patch had soaked through the white linen compress. I sat beside him and bent my head.

"All right, Watson. Don't look so scared," he muttered, in a very weak voice. "It's not as bad as it seems."

"Thank God for that!"

"I'm a bit of a single-stick expert, as you know. I took most of them on my guard. It was the second man that was too much for me."

"What can I do, Holmes? Of course, it was that damned fellow who set them on. I'll go and thrash the hide off him if you give the word."

"Good old Watson! No, we can do nothing there unless the police lay their hands on the men. But their get-away had been well prepared. We may be sure of that. Wait a little. I have my plans. The first thing is to exaggerate my injuries. They'll come to you for news. Put it on thick, Watson. Lucky if I live the week out—concussion—delirium—what you like! You can't overdo it."

"But Sir Leslie Oakshott?"

"Oh, he's all right. He shall see the worst side of me. I'll look after that."

"Anything else?"

"Yes. Tell Shinwell Johnson to get that girl out of the way. Those beauties will be after her now. They know, of course, that she was with me in the case. If they dared to do me in it is not likely they will neglect her. That is urgent. Do it to-night."

"I'll go now. Anything more?"

"Put my pipe on the table—and the tobacco-slipper. Right! Come in each morning and we will plan our campaign."

I arranged with Johnson that evening to take Miss Winter to a quiet suburb and see that she lay low until the danger was past.

FOR six days the public were under the impression that Holmes was at the door of death. The bulletins were very grave and there were sinister paragraphs in the papers. My continual visits assured me that it was not so bad as that. His wiry constitution and his determined will were working wonders. He was recovering fast, and I had suspicions at times that he was really finding himself faster than he pretended, even to me. There was a curious secretive streak in the man which led to many dramatic effects, but left even his closest friend guessing as to what his exact plans might be. He pushed to an extreme the axiom that the only safe plotter was he who plotted alone. I was nearer him than anyone else, and yet I was always conscious of the gap between.

On the seventh day the stitches were taken out, in spite of which there was a report of erysipelas in the evening papers. The same evening papers had an announcement which I was bound, sick or well, to carry to my friend. It was simply that among the passengers on the Cunard boat *Ruritania*, starting from Liverpool on Friday, was the Baron Adelbert Gruner, who had some important financial business to settle in the States before his impending wedding to Miss Violet de Merville, only daughter of, etc., etc. Holmes listened to the news with a cold, concentrated look upon his pale face, which told me that it hit him hard.

"Friday!" he cried. "Only three clear days. I believe the rascal wants to put himself out of danger's way. But he won't, Watson! By the Lord Harry, he won't! Now, Watson, I want you to do something for me."

"I am here to be used, Holmes."

"Well, then, spend the next twenty-four hours in an intensive study of Chinese pottery."

He gave no explanations and I asked for none. By long experience I had learned the wisdom of obedience. But when I had left his room I walked down Baker Street, revolving in my head how on earth I was to carry out so strange an order. Finally I drove to the London Library in St. James's Square, put the matter to my friend Lomax, the sub-librarian, and departed to my rooms with a goodly volume under my arm.

It is said that the barrister who crams up a case with such care that he can examine an expert witness upon the Monday has forgotten all his forced knowledge before the Saturday. Certainly I should not like now to pose as an authority upon ceramics. And yet all that evening, and all that night with a short interval for rest, and all next morning I was sucking in knowledge and committing names to memory. There I learned of the hall-marks of the great artist-decorators, of the mystery of cyclical dates, the marks of the Hung-wu and the beauties of the Yung-lo, the writings of Tang-ying, and the glories of the primitive period of the Sung and the Yuan. I was charged with all this information when I called upon Holmes next evening. He was out of bed now, though you would not have guessed it from the published reports, and he sat with his

The attack was made by two men armed with sticks.

much-bandaged head resting upon his hand in the depth of his favourite armchair.

"Why, Holmes," I said, "if one believed the papers you are dying."

"That," said he, "is the very impression which I intended to convey. And now, Watson, have you learned your lessons?"

"At least I have tried to."

"Good. You could keep up an intelligent conversation on the subject?"

"I believe I could."

"Then hand me that little box from the mantelpiece."

He opened the lid and took out a small object most carefully wrapped in some fine Eastern silk. This he unfolded and disclosed a delicate little saucer of the most beautiful deep-blue colour.

"It needs careful handling, Watson. This is the real egg-shell pottery of the Ming dynasty. No finer piece ever passed through Christie's. A complete set of this would be worth a king's ransom—in fact, it is doubtful if there is a complete set outside the Imperial palace of Peking. The sight of this would drive a real connoisseur wild."

"What am I to do with it?"

Holmes handed me a card upon which was printed: "Dr. Hill Barton, 369, Half Moon Street."

"That is your name for the evening, Watson. You will call upon Baron Gruner. I know something of his habits, and at half-past eight he would probably be disengaged. A note will tell him in advance that you are about to call, and you will say that you are bringing him a specimen of an absolutely unique set of Ming china. You may as well be a medical man, since that is a part which you can play without duplicity. You are a col-

lector, this set has come your way, you have heard of the Baron's interest in the subject, and you are not averse to selling at a price."

"What price?"

"Well asked, Watson. You would certainly fall down badly if you did not know the value of your own wares. This saucer was got for me by Sir James, and comes, I understand, from the collection of his client. You will not exaggerate if you say that it could hardly be matched in the world."

"I could perhaps suggest that the set should be valued by an expert."

"Excellent, Watson! You scintillate to-day. Suggest Christie or Sotheby. Your delicacy prevents your putting a price for yourself."

"But if he won't see me?"

"Oh, yes, he will see you. He has the collection mania in its most acute form—and especially on this subject, on which he is an acknowledged authority. Sit down, Watson, and I will dictate the letter. No answer needed. You will merely say that you are coming, and why."

It was an admirable document, short, courteous, and stimulating to the curiosity of the connoisseur. A district messenger was duly dispatched with it. On the same evening, with the precious saucer in my hand and the card of Dr. Hill Barton in my pocket, I set off on my own adventure.

THE beautiful house and grounds indicated that Baron Gruner was, as Sir James had said, a man of considerable wealth. A long winding drive, with banks of rare shrubs on either side, opened out into a great gravelled square adorned with statues. The place had been built by a South African gold king in the days of the great boom, and the long, low house with the turrets at the corners, though an architectural nightmare, was imposing in its size and solidity. A butler who would have adorned a bench of Bishops showed me in, and handed me over to a plush-clad footman, who ushered me into the Baron's presence.

He was standing at the open front of a great case which stood between the windows, and which contained part of his Chinese collection. He turned as I entered with a small brown vase in his hand.

"Pray sit down, doctor," said he. "I was looking over my own treasures and wondering whether I could really afford to add to them. This little Tang specimen, which dates from the seventh century, would probably interest you. I am sure you never saw finer workmanship or a richer glaze. Have you the Ming saucer with you of which you spoke?"

I carefully unpacked it and handed it to him. He seated himself at his desk, pulled over the lamp, for it was growing dark, and set himself to examine it. As he did so the yellow light beat upon his own features, and I was able to study them at my ease.

He was certainly a remarkably handsome man. His European reputation for beauty was fully deserved. In figure he was not more than of middle size, but was built upon graceful and active lines. His face was swarthy, almost Oriental, with large, dark, languorous eyes which might easily hold an irresistible fascination for women. His hair and moustache were raven black, the latter short, pointed, and carefully waxed. His features were regular and pleasing, save only his straight, thin-lipped mouth. If ever I saw a murderer's mouth it was there—a cruel, hard gash in the face, compressed, inexorable, and terrible. He was ill-advised to train his moustache away from it, for it was Nature's danger-signal, set as a warning to his victims. His voice was engaging and his manners perfect. In age I should have put him at little over thirty, though his record afterwards showed that he was forty-two.

"Very fine—very fine indeed!" he said at last. "And you say you have a set of six to correspond. What puzzles me is that I should not have heard of such magnificent specimens. I only know of one in England to match this, and it is certainly not likely to be in the market. Would it be indiscreet if I were to ask you, Dr. Hill Barton, how you obtained this?"

"Does it really matter?" I asked, with as careless an air as I could muster. "You can see that the piece is genuine, and, as to the value, I am content to take an expert's valuation."

"Very mysterious," said he, with a quick, suspicious flash of his dark eyes. "In dealing with objects of such value, one naturally wishes to know all about the transaction. That the piece is genuine is certain. I have no doubts at all about that. But suppose—I am bound to take every possibility into account—that it should prove afterwards that you had no right to sell?"

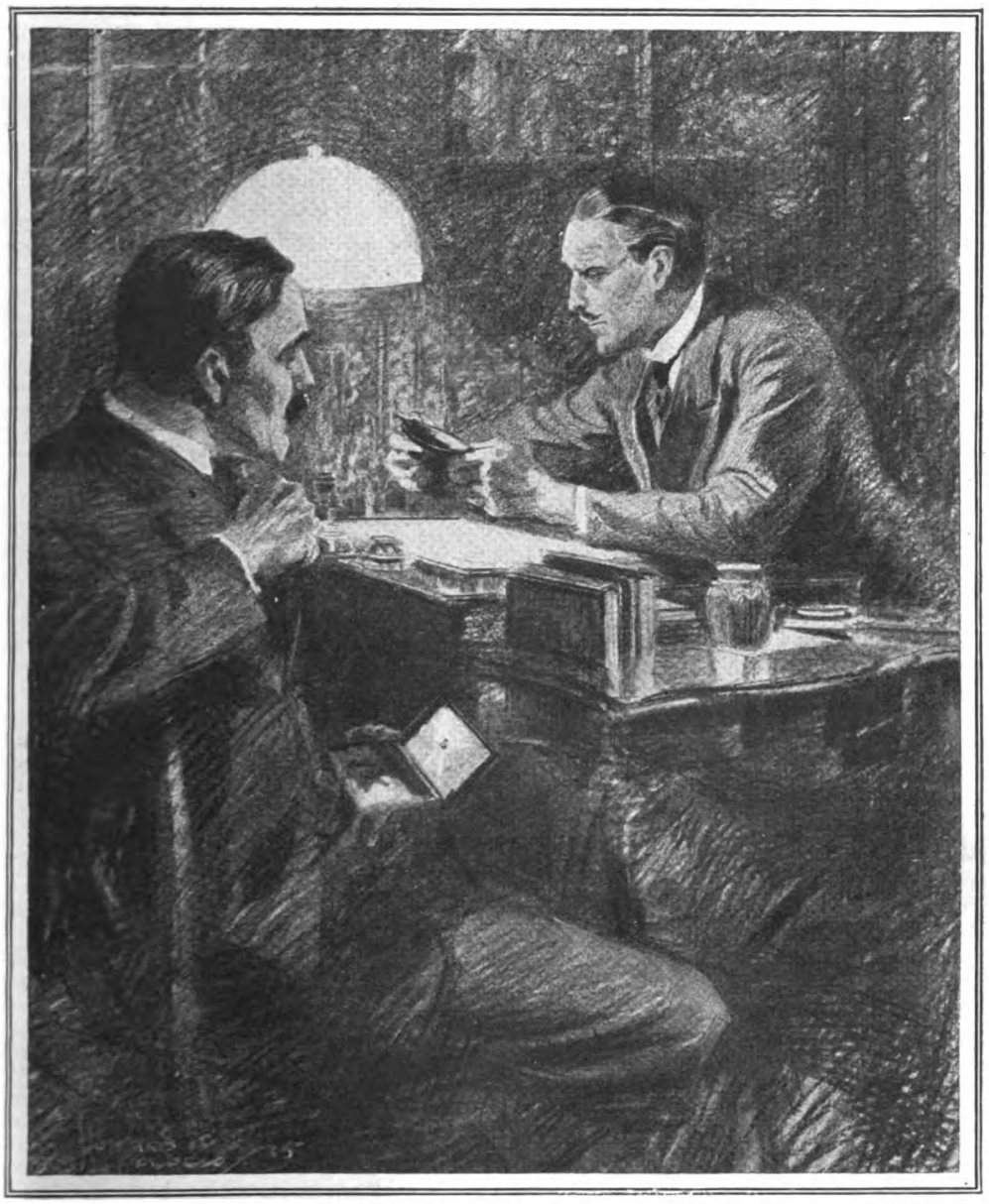
"I would guarantee you against any claim of the sort."

"That, of course, would open up the question as to what your guarantee was worth."

"My bankers would answer that."

"Quite so. And yet the whole transaction strikes me as rather unusual."

"You can do business or not," said I, with indifference. "I have given you the first offer as I understood that you were



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a connoisseur, but I shall have no difficulty in other quarters."

"Who told you I was a connoisseur?"

"I was aware that you had written a book upon the subject."

"Have you read the book?"

"No."

"Dear me, this becomes more and more difficult for me to understand! You are a connoisseur and collector with a very valuable piece in your collection, and yet you have never troubled to consult the one book which would have told you of the real meaning and value of what you held. How do you explain that?"

"I am a very busy man. I am a doctor in practice."

"That is no answer. If a man has a

hobby he follows it up, whatever his other pursuits may be. You said in your note that you were a connoisseur."

"So I am."

"Might I ask you a few questions to test you? I am obliged to tell you, doctor—if you are indeed a doctor—that the incident becomes more and more suspicious. I would ask you what do you know of the Emperor Shomu and how do you associate him with the Shoso-in near Nara? Dear me, does that puzzle you? Tell me a little about the Northern Wei dynasty and its place in the history of ceramics."

I sprang from my chair in simulated anger.

"This is intolerable, sir," said I. "I came here to do you a favour, and not to be examined as if I were a schoolboy. My knowledge on these subjects may be second only to your own, but I certainly shall not answer questions which have been put in so offensive a way."

He looked at me steadily. The languor had gone from his eyes. They suddenly glared. There was a gleam of teeth from between those cruel lips.

"What is the game? You are here as a spy. You are an emissary of Holmes. This is a trick that you are playing upon me. The fellow is dying, I hear, so he sends his tools to keep watch upon me. You've made your way in here without leave, and, by God! you may find it harder to get out than to get in."

He had sprung to his feet, and I stepped back, bracing myself for an attack, for the man was beside himself with rage. He may have suspected me from the first; certainly this cross-examination had shown him the truth; but it was clear that I could not hope to deceive him. He dived his hand into a side drawer and rummaged furiously. Then something struck upon his ear, for he stood listening intently.

"Ah!" he cried. "Ah!" and dashed into the room behind him.

Two steps took me to the open door, and my mind will ever carry a clear picture of the scene within. The window leading out to the garden was wide open. Beside it, looking like some terrible ghost, his head girt with bloody bandages, his face drawn and white, stood Sherlock Holmes. The next instant he was through the gap, and I heard the crash of his body among the laurel bushes outside. With a howl of rage the master of the house rushed after him to the open window.

And then! It was done in an instant, and yet I clearly saw it. An arm—a woman's arm—shot out from among the leaves. At the same instant the Baron uttered a horrible cry—a yell which will always ring in my memory. He clapped his

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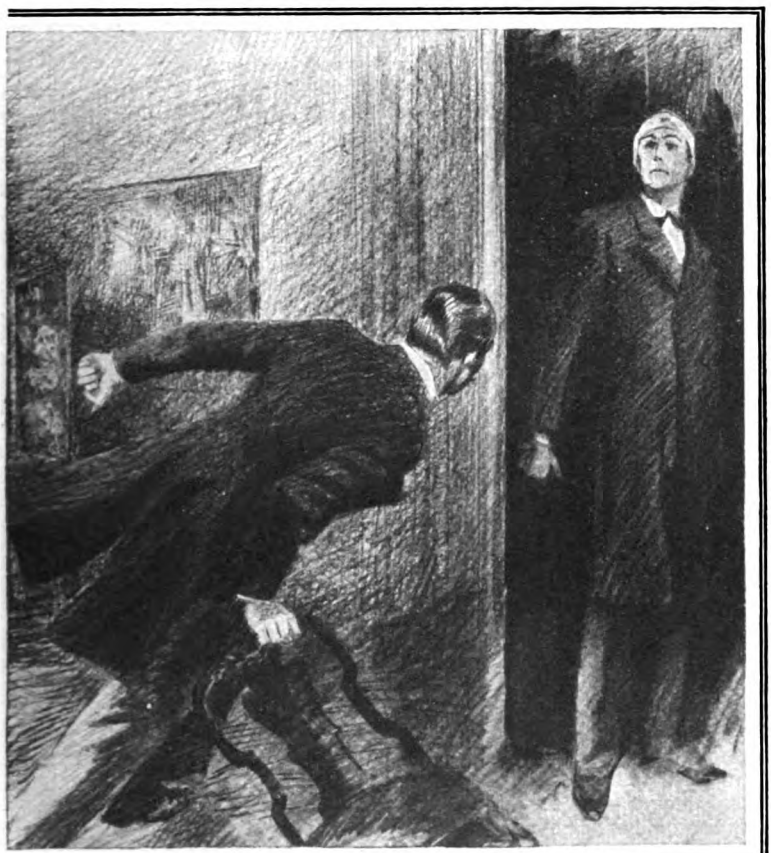


door. Beside the window, looking like some terrible ghost, his head and white, stood Sherlock Holmes.

two hands to his face and rushed round the room, beating his head horribly against the walls. Then he fell upon the carpet, rolling and writhing, while scream after scream resounded through the house.

"Water! For God's sake, water!" was his cry.

I seized a carafe from a side-table and rushed to his aid. At the same moment the butler and several footmen ran in from the hall. I remember that one of them fainted as I knelt by the injured man and turned that awful face to the light of the lamp. The vitriol was eating into it everywhere and dripping from the ears and the chin. One eye was already white and glazed. The other was red and inflamed. The features which I had admired a few minutes before were now like some beautiful painting over which the artist has passed a wet and foul sponge. They were blurred, discoloured, inhuman, terrible.

In a few words I explained exactly what had occurred, so far as the vitriol attack was concerned. Some had climbed through the window and others had rushed out on to the lawn, but it was dark and it had begun to rain. Between his screams the victim raged and raved against the avenger. "It was that hell-cat, Kitty Winter!" he cried. "Oh, the she-devil! She shall pay for it! She shall pay! Oh, God in heaven, this pain is more than I can bear!"

I bathed his face in oil, put cotton wadding on the raw surfaces, and administered a hypodermic of morphia. All suspicion of me had passed from his mind in the presence of this shock, and he clung to my hands as if I might have the power even yet to clear those dead-fish eyes which gazed up at me. I could have wept over the ruin had I not remembered very clearly the vile life which had led up to so hideous a change. It was loathsome to feel the pawing of his burning hands, and I was relieved when his family surgeon, closely followed by a specialist, came to relieve me of my charge. An inspector of police had also arrived, and to him I handed my real card. It would have been useless as well as foolish to do otherwise, for I was nearly as well known by sight at the Yard as Holmes himself. Then I left that house of gloom and terror. Within an hour I was at Baker Street.

Holmes was seated in his familiar chair, looking very pale and exhausted. Apart from his injuries, even his iron nerves had been shocked by the events of the evening, and he listened with horror to my account of the Baron's transformation.

"The wages of sin, Watson—the wages of sin!" said he. "Sooner or later it will

always come. God knows, there was sin enough," he added, taking up a brown volume from the table. "Here is the book the woman talked of. If this will not break off the marriage, nothing ever could. But it will, Watson. It must. No self-respecting woman could stand it."

"It is his love diary?"

"Or his lust diary. Call it what you will. The moment the woman told us of it I realized what a tremendous weapon was there, if we could but lay our hands on it. I said nothing at the time to indicate my thoughts, for this woman might have given it away. But I brooded over it. Then this assault upon me gave me the chance of letting the Baron think that no precautions need be taken against me. That was all to the good. I would have waited a little longer, but his visit to America forced my hand. He would never have left so compromising a document behind him. Therefore we had to act at once. Burglary at night is impossible. He takes precautions. But there was a chance in the evening if I could only be sure that his attention was engaged. That was where you and your blue saucer came in. But I had to be sure of the position of the book, and I knew I had only a few minutes in which to act, for my time was limited by your knowledge of Chinese pottery. Therefore I gathered the girl up at the last moment. How could I guess what the little packet was that she carried so carefully under her cloak? I thought she had come altogether on my business, but it seems she had some of her own."

"He guessed I came from you."

"I feared he would. But you held him in play just long enough for me to get the book, though not long enough for an unobserved escape. Ah, Sir James, I am very glad you have come!"

Our courtly friend had appeared in answer to a previous summons. He listened with the deepest attention to Holmes's account of what had occurred.

"You have done wonders—wonders!" he cried, when he had heard the narrative. "But if these injuries are as terrible as Dr. Watson describes, then surely our purpose of thwarting the marriage is sufficiently gained without the use of this horrible book."

Holmes shook his head.

"Women of the de Merville type do not act like that. She would love him the more as a disfigured martyr. No, no. It is his moral side, not his physical, which we have to destroy. That book will bring her back to earth—and I know nothing else that could. It is in his own writing. She cannot get past it."

Sir James carried away both it and the precious saucer. As I was myself overdue, I went down with him into the street. A brougham was waiting for him. He sprang in, gave a hurried order to the cockaded coachman, and drove swiftly away. He flung his overcoat half out of the window to cover the armorial bearings upon the panel, but I had seen them in the glare of our fanlight none the less. I gasped with surprise. Then I turned back and ascended the stair to Holmes's room.

"I have found out who our client is," I cried, bursting with my great news. "Why, Holmes, it is——"

"It is a loyal friend and a chivalrous gentleman," said Holmes, holding up a restraining hand. "Let that now and for ever be enough for us."

I DO not know how the incriminating book was used. Sir James may have managed it. Or it is more probable that so delicate a task was entrusted to the young lady's father. The effect, at any rate, was all that could be desired. Three days later appeared a paragraph in *The Morning Post* to say that the marriage between Baron Adelbert Gruner and Miss Violet de Merville would not take place. The same paper had the first police-court hearing of the proceedings against Miss Kitty Winter on the grave charge of vitriol-throwing. Such extenuating circumstances came out in the trial that the sentence, as will be remembered, was the lowest that was possible for such an offence. Sherlock Holmes was threatened with a prosecution for burglary, but when an object is good and a client is sufficiently illustrious, even the rigid British law becomes human and elastic. My friend has not yet stood in the dock.

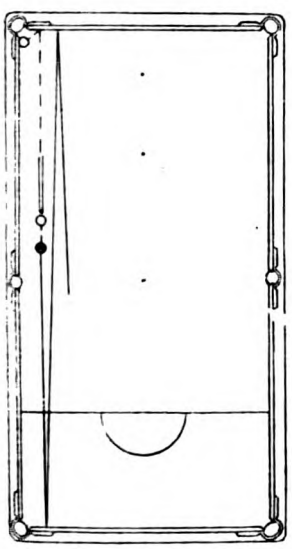
"The Most Wonderful Shot I Ever Saw."

A SYMPOSIUM OF THE LEADING BILLIARD PLAYERS

TOM NEWMAN,

Champion.

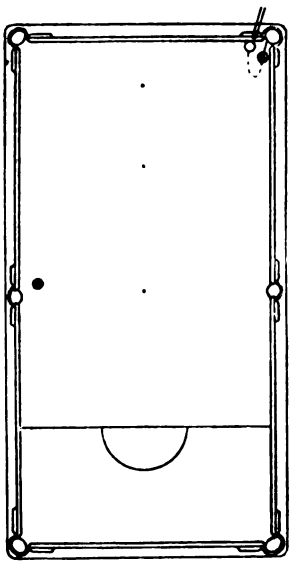
TO my way of thinking, the really wonderful shot at billiards is an extraordinarily good one which is made when it is wanted in actual play. Willie Smith is both daring and clever at this phase of the game, and I select a truly great shot he made against me in the critical stage of an important match. As my diagram shows, it was the easiest thing in the world to pot the white and leave a double baulk; and there were possible strokes at the red of no particular account. The one and only stroke of any break-building value was the powerful screw-back cannon depicted in the diagram, which had to be handled supremely well to gain command of the balls. If played direct from red to white, it was a bad shot, almost certain to lose the white in the top pocket. To avoid this, Smith played to miss the white direct, completing the cannon off the top cushion by imparting strong left side to the cue-ball, a very fine shot indeed considering the distance the balls were apart. He left in-off the white for his next shot, and steered the red into lovely middle-pocket position to continue his break with. All things considered, I regard this as a very wonderful shot, especially as it enabled Smith to score over four hundred points before I had a shot at the balls. He had scored less than fifty when confronted by this leave, and the full break was nearly five hundred when he had to give me a chance—then he left me a double baulk.



WILLIE SMITH,

Ex-Champion.

Having played so much against Tom Newman, it is but natural that I should select one of his strokes as the most wonderful I ever saw. It is difficult, however, to do this, as Newman's marvellous control of the balls at close quarters exhibits so many masterly touches that I could scarcely pick one out as *the* shot, so to speak. Besides, it so happens that the most wonderful individual shot I ever saw him make was at snooker. It occurred one afternoon at Burroughes Hall, when we ran to our sessional points so quickly at billiards that a couple of games of snooker were played to fill up the programme. Towards the finish of the second game, the balls were left as shown in my diagram. With only the pink and the black on the table, Newman was left

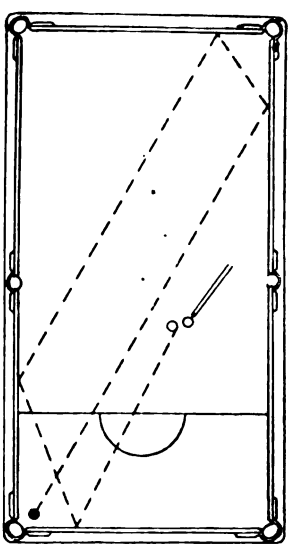


in splendid position to run in-off the pink, but where it seemed out of the game to pocket it. He did it by means of the terrific massé shot shown in my diagram, making his ball pass the pink and curl back on it to score the hazard. After this Newman took the sitting black and won by a couple of points entirely through playing one of the most wonderful strokes I have ever seen made on a billiard table. In fact, I cannot readily call to mind another instance of the use of the grand massé in winning hazard play; the stroke is so difficult that only a master of the cue dare even attempt it.

MELBOURNE INMAN,

Ex-Champion.

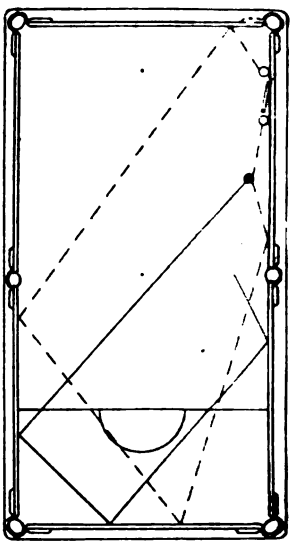
The most wonderful shot I ever had anything to do with cropped up when I was playing Stevenson for the Championship as far back as 1910. The position is well shown here, and I can assure you that it was a most awkward leave to have to tackle when the Championship hung in the balance. The red ball was near the pocket, I dare not give a miss, and I looked round the table in vain for a safety shot of any sort. As the red was covered and my ball was so close to the white that a direct cannon was not playable, it seemed that a score was as hopeless as a safety move. It made me think for a full couple of minutes, then I worked out the multi-cushion cannon shown in the diagram. It came off, and I was very pleased indeed to see it materialize. Believe me, it was not the sort of stroke I wanted to play over again just to show my opponent how I did it.



W. P. McLEOD,

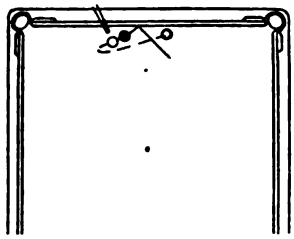
Amateur Champion.

The one shot that I shall never forget was the cannon I had to play against Mr. J. Graham Symes in the final of the 1923 Amateur Championship. It was the only thing to do—the run through off the white into the top pocket was too risky to attempt. So I tried my best for the cannon shown in the diagram, playing it with strong top and side in such a manner that the red was brought out of baulk and over the middle pocket off three cushions. I scored the cannon in this way, and I can honestly say that I was wonderfully glad to get it. In this respect it was the most wonderful shot I ever saw.



CLAUDE FALKINER.

Ever since I took up billiard playing, complex ball movements have had a peculiar fascination for me. Some of these produce most beautiful stroke effects, and I think that the example shown is as good as anything of its kind I have ever seen. It is a cannon made by the reverse action massé, which means imparting three distinct movements to the cue-ball. The balls are too close together for any stroke except a massé to be played, and the ordinary massé offers no positional advantage. This is gained by playing the cannon as illustrated, which calls for manipulative skill seldom seen in English billiards, being more common in American and Continental cannon games. The three ball movements work like this—there is

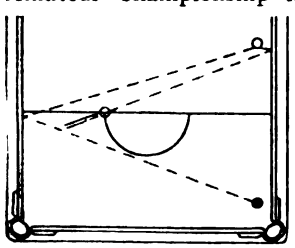


first the slight forward run necessary to take the cue-ball to the red—then backward rotation comes into action and spins the cue-ball back as much as a couple of inches—then forward spin reasserts itself and the cue-ball darts forward to complete the cannon. This attains the positional objective, as, while the cue-ball is backing and turning, the red has time to get out of the way of the cannon and settle down in excellent position. Altogether, a wonderful stroke, and one I am always delighted to make when it is offered.

SIDNEY H. FRY,

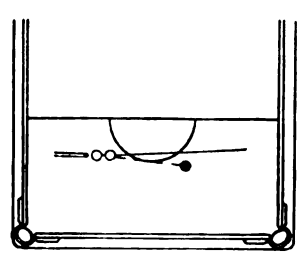
Seven times Amateur Champion.

The most wonderful shot I ever saw was made against me by Mr. Hooper, the Australian gentleman who did so well in our Amateur Championship in spite of being obliged to play with ivory balls, to which he was unaccustomed. Playing from the corner spot of the "D" and using a good deal of side, he struck the side cushion before hitting the white and brought off the wonderful cannon shown in my diagram. It was a remarkable shot, and, as the balls lie, it is difficult to suggest a better one.



TOM REECE.

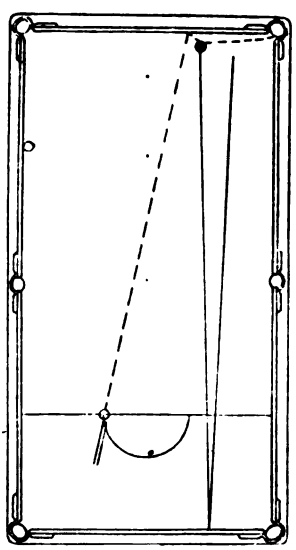
Of the many wonderful strokes the game offers to the skilled exponent, cannons have always made a strong appeal to me because they demand such a diversity of sheer cuemanship. Side, top, screw, picque, massé, you must be master of them all to excel at cannon play. Even then you are likely to find yourself confronted by problems which make a full call on your ability and knowledge. This is proved by the stroke here shown, which occurred in actual play a few years ago. The position is that the cue-ball is much too close to the white for a follow-through cannon to appear possible without a push, and when I made the cannon by a pure follow-through, I can assure you that both the referee and my opponent were watching me very closely. They were perfectly satisfied that the stroke was as fair as could be, played without the semblance of a push. There was no doubt about this because my ball seemed to spin forward instead of rolling in the usual way, so powerful was the forward rotation imparted to it. As a matter of fact, it barely reached the red, and, as is so often the case after a wonderful individual stroke, I had nothing much left for my pains.



W. J. PEALL,

The old All-in Champion and Spot-Stroke Record Holder.

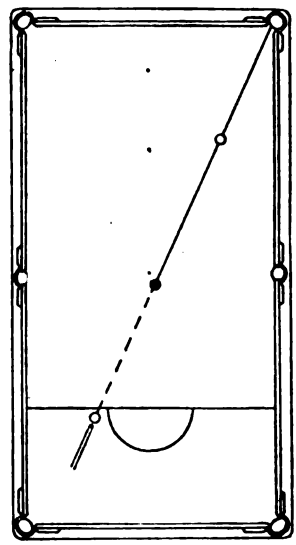
When I was playing against John Roberts on one occasion, he was exceptionally brilliant, even for him. Playing like a man inspired, he went out for every kind of shot and scored them all in his unrivalled style. Thinking it was time I had a turn at a big shot of my very own, I played for the red losing hazard illustrated in the diagram, making it by striking the top cushion first with plenty of side on my ball. It came off very prettily, leaving me capital position for a break. John Roberts looked very hard at me as I made the shot, seeming rather doubtful whether I played for it or not. So, to set his mind at rest, I made another of the same kind shortly afterwards. I may say that at one time this shot was rather a favourite of mine. I used it when making quite a number of awkward cannons, and not infrequently relied upon it for a pocket.



"The Most Wonderful Shot I Ever Saw"

JOE DAVIS.

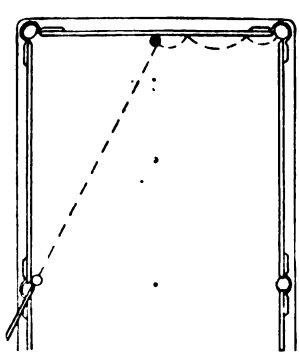
The most wonderful shot I ever saw was made at Chesterfield by an amateur. The balls were left as shown in the diagram, all three dead in line, and the position is not particularly inviting. I cannot say what the striker thought he was playing for, but I know that he drove his ball full and hard on the red with such strength and truth that the red sent the white into the top pocket, followed on into the same pocket, and was joined there by the cue-ball at the finish. This was one of the very rare instances in which all three balls were played into the same pocket, a thing that happens seldom indeed, and I regard it as very improbable that I shall ever see it happen again in the manner here illustrated.



ARTHUR GOUNDRILL.

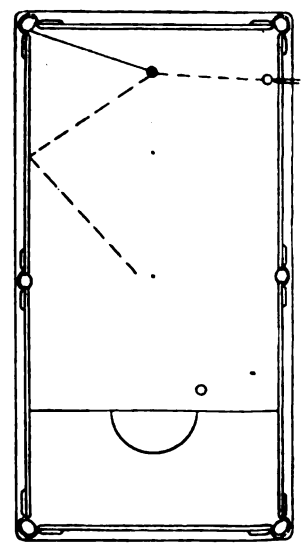
One-arm Billiard Champion.

Really, I need two tables to show the most wonderful stroke I ever saw. This was made in my old Army days. We had a couple of tables in our recreation room in barracks, and a bold smiter hit his ball with such wild abandon that it jumped from the table he was playing on and ran in-off the red on the next table. Turning to something more feasible, a gentleman who saw me giving my display of exhibition strokes some time ago put the balls up in the position shown in the diagram, the red being dead tight against the top cushion. He told me that John Roberts used to play in-off the red from this abnormal position as an exhibition stroke, using enough top, side, and cue-power to make his ball ricochet along the cushion in a series of curves to the pocket. Agreeing that the stroke was a very wonderful one, I experimented with it, and after a lot of hard work I managed to do it and add it to my programme of fancy shots. I regard it as the most wonderful shot I know, and never attempt it unless I feel in first-rate form. If I am a little below par, I cut out this shot and tell a funny story instead!



TOM TOTHILL.

The most wonderful stroke I ever saw or ever want to see in my own play occurred in a snooker match. Having made a break of seventy-three, I was within striking distance of Newman's record of eighty-six, when, after potting the last red, I was left in the position shown in my diagram. The black was on the spot, the yellow was just outside the baulk line as indicated, and without smothering the diagram with all the other balls, I can assure you that they were so well placed that it was a good thing for me to "clear the board" and set up a new record. Everything depended on potting the black to gain position on the yellow. After this the rest was comparatively easy. With my ball so close to the cushion, I had to play at smashing strength at the black. The result was that I banged it into the pocket at such express speed that it jumped a full two feet straight into the air and dropped just clear of the pocket on to the floor. Afterwards, I discovered by experiment that the black jumped from the spot to the pocket-rim and then up in the air, the reason being that wicked dent which is too often seen on a billiard table just where the ball has to be spotted. This made the black jump all the way, and cost me the world's record at snooker.



The Persistent Mr. Babbicombe

By

CATHERINE WELLS

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY LLOYD

Probably very few readers know that the wife of Mr. H. G. Wells is herself a writer of great charm and distinction, as will be obvious to all who read the following story from her pen.

THE late Mr. Babbicombe, Principal of the West Essex Agricultural College, did not live in that building, but inhabited a small villa on the outskirts of Buntingford about half a mile away. He was a widower, but he had his daughter Sissie to keep house for him and give him companionship, and until her engagement to Mr. Arthur Saunders, his assistant master, his life was a contented one. He was a short, stoutish little man, with a face like a moon, an effect enhanced by the big round spectacles with light tortoiseshell rims that he wore to assist his pale blue eyes. His daughter at twenty-five was also solid in figure and very blonde, but not uncomely. It was not remarkable that Mr. Arthur Saunders, who was himself rather a bony wisp of a young man, should find her attractive. It was not remarkable, but Mr. Babbicombe would have none of it. Whether he objected in particular to Mr. Saunders or in general to losing his daughter did not plainly emerge; what was certain was that he refused to recognize the young couple's engagement, and told Mr. Saunders that if he persisted in his unsuitable addresses to his daughter he should be compelled for her protection to dispense with his services at the Agricultural College forthwith.

Now this, as anyone in the scholastic profession will understand, was such a

serious contingency for Mr. Saunders to be faced with that it produced a doubt in his mind as to whether after all he and his *fiancée* were really quite suited to one another. The eager pulse of youth, the pleasant spring weather—had these things perhaps not deluded them both into a hasty infatuation where there should be nothing but deliberation and balanced choice? If they were indeed suited to one another, then to marry his head master's daughter had every collateral advantage; if they were, after all, on reflection, not suited, it would be disastrous to force a distasteful alliance upon a father-in-law who held the fateful power of the "reference."

Miss Babbicombe herself did not feel these doubts. "Dear Papa," she wrote to her forbidden suitor, "only wants Time," though, indeed, Mr. Saunders had thought in the first heat of disappointment that he wanted a younger assailant; and at church she gazed so lovingly and persistently at Mr. Saunders, in the endeavour to assure him of her unshakable fidelity under the very frown of her father, that Mr. Saunders went hot and cold with nervousness all through Morning Prayer, and feigned a cold in the evening that kept him at home. It was at the end of the Spring term and the beginning of the Easter vacation, and so Mr. Saunders was able to withdraw a few days later from Buntingford and stay with his married sister at Croydon as a paying guest, according to his usual holiday habit, without seeming to be in flight from Mr. Babbicombe's disfavour or his daughter's ardour. And, he reflected, feeling a little tired after so much excitement, "think it over."

"DEAR Papa," wrote Miss Babbicombe the very day after Mr. Saunders's departure, "will relent, I know, when we show him how firm we can be." A long letter it was, robustly full of faith and hope. Mr. Saunders wanted to write to her recommending her with all his power not to harass Mr. Babbicombe by firmness at present; and that their best—oh, beyond all expression their best course of action, was to refrain from action in word or deed; and then he did not like to do so in case Mr. Babbicombe might recognize his writing on the envelope, and be moved to send him his dismissal from the college forthwith. The restful feeling with which he had arrived at Croydon was dissipated by every post until it had completely gone. "Dear Papa," said the fourth letter, "must not feel that we can be separated so easily. I am always letting him see in little ways that I am thinking of you." Cold shivers ran down the spine of Mr. Saunders as he read. "I shall find all sorts of ways of reminding him of you and getting him used to the idea of our engagement. Constant dropping wears away a stone, as the old proverb says, and Papa's heart cannot be a stone when his only daughter's life-long happiness is at stake. I do hope you will not take cold this windy weather. Papa went to London yesterday to buy some books and things, and to-day he has a nasty cold. I took the chance of saying what a pity it was he hadn't some young man he could have sent to get the things for him and save him the trouble and the draught in the railway carriage. He was very cross at that and dropped some egg on his coat, but I feel it all helps."

Mr. Saunders reached out for the note-paper, for this sort of thing positively had to be stopped. He wrote a most emphatic letter, telling her how wrong it was to worry her father, whose first care was only her own welfare. He wrote it as though Mr. Babbicombe were looking over his shoulder. He began it "My dear Friend." It was a difficult letter to compose to his satisfaction, and he wrote three versions, and finally resuscitated the first. With amazing swiftness he received an answer full of reproaches for his seeming coldness and of argument against his submissive tactics; eight pages of it. "I cannot write more, dearest Arthur, as Papa is in bed with his cold and I cannot leave his side," she ended up startlingly. And then, the very next day, another letter. "I am sure our separation has lasted long enough," she wrote. "All this misunderstanding can be avoided if I can see you and have a good long talk." And she proposed that as soon as her father was well enough to be left she should come to Croydon, "as perhaps that will be better in Papa's present mood than your coming here, and as we should meet at your married sister's house no reproach could be laid on us in these modern days especially. Dear Papa is very feverish, and has been wanting to write an important letter, I think to you; but as I was sure it was best not, I have kept away the paper and pen and ink from him so far. Do not forget I am for ever and through every trial your loving Sissie."

And then: "P.S. Don't you think it would be nice if, *after*, you called me Cecily in public? though I would like to be Sissie to you always for your very own name."

Mr. Saunders felt like an entangled fly that once, careless and happy, had hopped on to the sweet-smelling treacle, and was now hopelessly glued and lost. All the delicate, extracting phrases he had thought of about their suitability to one another, about being "quite sure" and so on, had had no chance. Then all at once he realized

It was not remarkable that Mr. Arthur Saunders should find her attractive.

that, Mr. Babbicombe being in bed, he could write to Sissie without his seeing the letter arrive, and so, instead of taking his sister's little boy to the South Kensington Museum, he sat down to write "an important business letter," and tried by every means he could think of to throw cold water on the Croydon expedition project. There was much about her "first duty," much about patience and self-sacrifice, and much about their higher selves. He read it all through several times and liked it very much, and if he still felt like a treacled fly, he felt as if he were quite hopefully cleaning at least one leg and a wing.

And then there happened a truly startling event. He came down to breakfast, looking apprehensively at his plate for the inevitable letter, and it was there, but with a black border round the envelope so broad that his *fiancée's* flowing handwriting was crushed together unrecognizably in the small white middle space. Dear, darling Papa was dead. She couldn't write more. He would understand. Presently—— But not now.

And an hour later a telegram. "The funeral is on Thursday at twelve. Send your flowers to me here."

The telegram, just as he was beginning to recover himself a little, was unpleasing. Why, in the name of all that was reasonable, "his" flowers? He would have to contribute to a joint wreath from the college staff, naturally. That was quite enough. And as a member of the staff he would have to attend the funeral. But he would attend it strictly as a member of the staff. There was no reason to behave precipitately. It wasn't decent. And also one had to remember that, until a new head master was appointed and things settled down, one's prospects were uncertain, and one couldn't count on retaining——

A heavy object fell with a thump into the hall letter-box just at this point, and the postman rapped smartly.

"'Damn!" said the worried Mr. Saunders.

He replied to his betrothed with a letter of dignified sympathy, carefully non-committal.

She wanted him to take her publicly to the funeral and stand by her side at the service, and an artless, rejoicing note came almost audibly into the full-flowing style of her letters; but he insisted, even by telegram at last, that his place was irrevocably with the staff, and that loyalty demanded him there. And he managed to arrive at Buntingford only just in time to join the other men at the college and walk with them to the church. Whether caused by worry or otherwise, he had a bad toothache, and no one could have looked more appropriately miserable than he did on the melancholy occasion. Miss Babbicombe, profoundly in mourning, was in the centre of the picture, and he was only too well aware of her signalling by a hundred female arts that she was thoroughly alive to his presence, and counted confidently on his joining her after the service was over. His toothache increased, the wind was cold and the service long drawn out, and Mr. Saunders became more and more miserable and cross. He was not going to be rushed. No, he would not be rushed. He had discovered the word, and it was a comforting one. He made what was almost a back-door exit from the college and almost a flight to the railway station. "Oh, *Lord!*" he groaned, propping his aching cheek upon his cold hand, in the corner of the third-class carriage that stopped at every station all the way up to London—stopped at it and had a good look at it, as if it was thinking of living there for good when the time came for old age to oblige it to give up locomotion and disintegrate into those garden shelters and bungalows and hen-houses that so remarkably adorn our rural countryside.

TWO days later, when Mr. Saunders had had the tooth out, he recovered tone sufficiently to remark that he had had no letter from Miss Babbicombe since the funeral. He was in that feeble state that follows on a bout of exhausting pain, and he wanted feminine comfort. He wrote to her and made much of the toothache. He couldn't have inflicted his troubles upon her, he said, to add to her own burthen. He had barely posted the letter when he received one from her, excusing herself profusely for seeming to neglect him, and referring voluminously and nebulously to lawyers, insurance, and her "inheritance."

This letter cheered up Mr. Saunders very much. He began to feel that he had borne the toothache creditably, and that it had been a thoroughly plucky action to have the thing out. He was a man who would stand no nonsense, even from a tooth. He had not stood any nonsense from the late Mr. Babbicombe either; he had given not an inch more than the deference obligatory upon a young man to an old one. He had held his position firmly all the time. He was not a man to be turned from his purpose, once determined. He would go to Buntingford the very next day and call upon his *fiancée*, and everything would be decorous and in order. There was no reason why they should "wait" longer than was strictly necessary for satisfying the conventions of mourning. There would be some female relative of hers capable of deciding on the proper period. Meanwhile, he must hasten to comfort his poor Sissie, console her for her irreparable loss, and endeavour to make it up to her by his own presence. He wrote something of this in an earnest and feelingly-expressed little note, and went to Buntingford the next day by a morning train.

It was a mild and delightful day. The English spring, having killed Mr. Babbicombe, seemed to feel now in better spirits, and even to be a bit sorry and inclined to pass it all off by distracting explosions of crocuses and things. Mr. Saunders walked down the station incline and along the road to the Babbicombe villa, swinging his stick and thinking that after his marriage they might even be able to afford to go on living in that convenient little house. It depended how his future wife was "left," but it would be very natural for her not to wish to leave her old home. They might take two or three students as boarders. So scheming pleasantly, Mr. Saunders arrived at the neat garden gate, walked up the gravel path, and rang the electric bell.

The late Mr. Babbicombe opened the door.

It is very difficult to describe exactly how Mr. Saunders felt then. The appearance of Mr. Babbicombe holding open the door, moon-faced and absent-minded in expression, was so entirely usual that for the moment Mr. Saunders did not feel the astonishment and dismay that came over him as soon as his mind had time to realize what an extraordinary thing was happening. He stared at Mr. Babbicombe, who was standing with his back against the passage wall, holding the door wide open, and his head began to spin; he felt sick and giddy; and then his *fiancée* appeared at the end of the hall passage and advanced to meet him with the glad cry of "Arthur!" In some confused and dreadful way they were embracing decorously in the passage, and Mr. Babbicombe had completely disappeared. "I left the door ajar for you," she whispered, "so's there'd be nobody to see us," and embraced him again. "Come along," she urged, and helped Mr. Saunders, whose head was still spinning horribly, off with his coat and hat

and hung them up on the hall-stand. She led him into the drawing-room, with one arm firmly about his shoulders, and sat him down beside herself on a long sofa and scrutinized him. "You *are* looking queer!" she said.

Mr. Saunders pulled himself together. Evidently he had been the victim of a momentary hallucination, a dreadful hallucination, due no doubt to his depressed state of health. "I don't feel quite myself," he admitted.

"That toothache must have upset you a lot," she said. "You look ever so pale."

"It pulled me down a good deal," replied Mr. Saunders. He would have liked to ask if she had some brandy, but he hardly knew how to justify that demand so early in the day. It would never do to give her the idea that he was not almost an abstainer. He made a great effort to collect himself, and essayed an endearment that he had thought of in the train. "And how is my *Cecily?*" he asked, in a meaning tone. It was well received, and presently he was able to guide her gently into a statement of her fortune. It seemed that she would have about a hundred and forty pounds a year of her own, and though Mr. Saunders had thought of a larger sum, yet he realized that he was lucky in his position in life to have found a mate with anything at all. A stout lady came into the room, after some tactful preliminary coughing outside the door, whom Miss Babbicombe called Auntie Florence, and who resembled the late Mr. Babbicombe sufficiently to give Mr. Saunders for the moment a very unpleasant sensation. "Dinner's ready," said Auntie Florence, jovially; Miss Babbicombe said stiffly to Mr. Saunders, "Are you ready for Lunch?" and led the way into the dining-room.

Mr. Saunders followed with Auntie Florence and wondered if it could possibly have been her that he had seen indistinctly and mistaken for—— He could not help glancing nervously at the passage end by the front door, but there was nothing supernatural to be seen there. Of course it had been all imagination. Interesting probably to one of these new psychology writers. But it wouldn't be a bad thing to get himself a tonic. He ought not to be seeing anything except what was there to be seen.

"NOW, would you like to sit here, Mr. Saunders?" said Aunt Florence. "Then you'll be able to look at Sissie."

"I daresay he'll soon get tired of that," put in Miss Babbicombe, with an arch look at Mr. Saunders. "Did you get the peas, Auntie?"

A small servant pushed open the door with the big tray she carried, put it on the sideboard, and began a clattering placement of the dishes on the table.

"Cauliflower, dear," corrected Auntie Florence.

"Cauliflower, is it?" replied Miss Babbicombe, contemptuously. "I saw some peas yesterday in Struggles' shop. Didn't I tell you?"

"They was all gone this morning, then," said Aunt Florence. "Fancy peas this time of year! Sissie wants to spoil you already, Mr. Saunders."

"There's no harm in having something nice occasionally, *I* think," said Sissie. "Let me give you some potatoes, Arthur Why, now, what *are* you doing?"

Mr. Saunders, who was holding his plate over the middle of the table to be helped, suddenly seemed to lose control of his fingers, the plate tipped violently, and the gravy streamed over its edge on to the immaculate cloth. He had just caught sight of Mr. Babbicombe standing at the sideboard, dignified and detached, gazing upward and looking at nobody, like the best of butlers.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Auntie Florence, and while he stammered apologies she got up and hurried out of the room and back with a kitchen cloth, and began to mop up the spreading juicy stain.

Mr. Saunders, out of the corner of his eye, saw that Mr. Babbicombe had taken occasion to disappear again. Pale-faced and shaky, he looked on at the mopping up. "I really don't know how I came to do it," he said over and over again, trembling and agitated. "I *am* sorry," he said, with a fleeting look sideways at the empty wall space. "Spoiling your nice clean cloth like that."

"Accidents will happen," said Auntie Florence, recovering herself, and resolved that the cheerfulness of the meal should not be marred. "If we none of us ever do anything worse than that there won't be much amiss."

"Aren't you feeling well, Arthur?" asked Miss Babbicombe.

He was white-faced and staring with dropped mouth at the wall by the sideboard. There was nothing there, but he was absolutely certain that if he had looked just before he had in fact looked, he would have seen Mr. Babbicombe again.

He made a great effort. "A bit headachey," he admitted, and resolutely tackled his plateful of mutton. His eyes must be overstrained, he must see a doctor and get advice at once. Overwork, overstrain. And meanwhile he must ignore this ridiculous

hallucination. Pure hallucination! He had always been sceptical about the supernatural. But the clearness of the figure he saw! He could have sworn——

Ignore it absolutely. Attend to Auntie Florence's conversation.

"I've always heard Croydon is a nice part," that lady was remarking with an air of great social ease. "Has your sister been in the same house for long, Mr. Saunders?"

"About five years it must be now," replied Mr. Saunders.

"Oh, quite a nice time," said Aunt Florence, cordially. "She must be feeling quite settled. Did you tell me—has she any little ones?"

Mr. Saunders indicated his nephew briefly.

"I love children," enthused Aunt Florence. "Give me a child in the house to make it a home, I say. Tiresome though they are many a time. You'd never believe the trouble Sissie was to her poor mamma——"

"Now, Auntie," put in Sissie, rather crossly.

"I seen her smacked for something—oh, dear!" cried Aunt Florence, laughing immoderately at the recollection. "And your poor father holding you——"

At the word "father" Mr. Babbicombe came out of nothing hard and bright and clear, as one might say "Ping!" right opposite Mr. Saunders behind Sissie's chair. Mr. Saunders gasped with terror, but Sissie was so red and angry with Auntie Florence and so busy suppressing her unsuitable anecdote that this time she did not notice Mr. Saunders's disturbance. Presently Mr. Babbicombe faded away again, and Mr. Saunders, holding on doggedly to his self-control, tried with all his might to listen to Auntie Florence's long story about a dear old collie dog that had once belonged to her married sister, and who would never bite children even when he was quite blind. It was a terrible meal, but it was over at last.

"Now you'd better come and rest your head a bit," said Miss Babbicombe, and led Mr. Saunders back into the little drawing-room. There she put him on the sofa with his feet up and a cushion embroidered with beads under his head and told him to shut his eyes; and, remarkable as it may seem, the exhausted Mr. Saunders did presently fall into a doze.

HE was awakened by the attentive Sissie, holding a cup of tea for him. "Better now, dear?" she asked, and, feeling refreshed, he sat up and drank the tea, and did indeed feel much better.

"Nice tea," he said; and kissed her, he felt in such good spirits.

"I shall have some too, here with you," said Miss Babbicombe, and fetched a cup of tea for herself and sat beside him on the sofa and sipped it. "Isn't it nice and homey, dear?" she murmured, nestling close to him.

"Homey," said Mr. Saunders, meaningly. "It will soon be time to think of that."

"Oh, I don't know," said Sissie, coyly.

"Why not?" he pressed.

"You mustn't be in such a hurry," parried Sissie.

Mr. Saunders had not realized that he was in a hurry, but the conversation pushed him. "How can I help it?" he answered, squeezing her with the arm that she had guided round her shoulders.

"Well, it can't be while I'm in mourning," said Sissie, with a regretful note in her voice, and at the allusion the empty third of the sofa was suddenly occupied by Mr. Babbicombe. There he sat, beyond Sissie, but so near that it looked as if Mr. Saunders's encircling arm must be touching him, sitting looking absently straight before him and out of the window opposite, taking no notice whatever of the young couple, but *there*—horribly and dreadfully *there*.

Mr. Saunders drew back his arm and put his head between his hands.

"Oh, don't do that, Arthur," said Miss Babbicombe, under the impression that this despairful gesture was the expression of unbearable disappointment at the postponement of their nuptials. "I'll be able to see you every day once the holidays are over. It won't be so long to wait, either. Perhaps when I'm out of *deep* mourning——"

But Mr. Saunders kept his face buried in his hands. He was determined not to look at that dreadful apparition any more, and the last thing he felt able to do was to explain to the matter-of-fact Sissie that her father, equally matter-of-fact, was sitting on the sofa beside them, and could presumably hear every word they said and see everything they did. He took refuge in prevarication, moaned slightly, and said in a muffled voice through his hands, "It's my head!"

"Oh, dear!" said Sissie, in a disappointed tone. "Just as we were getting so comfy."

Mr. Saunders felt he must get away from the house at all costs. "Mus' go," he muttered. "Better to-morrow—come again," and got up with one hand still over his eyes and groped his way to the door.

"Arthur!" cried Miss Babbicombe, dismayed and unregarded.

He got away. He was terrified at first,

afraid of leaving the open freedom of the street, where his late employer did not once appear, for the shut railway compartment, where he dreaded he might find that gentleman occupying a seat opposite with a third-class ticket to London. He chose a compartment that was quite full of people and wedged himself in. But indeed Mr. Babbicombe appeared no more.

When Mr. Saunders was somewhat recovered and able to think it all over, he reasoned that Mr. Babbicombe was haunting his own house. It increased the secret persuasion that he had had all the time, that this was no hallucination of his tired eyes, but a real apparition. Mr. Babbicombe had disliked him and been very angry about him, and dead or alive he was not going to have him in his house anyhow. It put out of the question the agreeable plan of taking on that pleasant little abode after the marriage. Pleasant indeed! Mothers-in-law were nothing to it. If he kept on his post at the college they must get a house right out on the other side of the town.

He invited Sissie, who wrote urgently-inquiring letters about his headaches, to come to Croydon and spend the day at his sister's house. Everything went most agreeably until he took Sissie for a walk in the afternoon. They went up the asphalted roads, past the fences of innumerable small new villas, with boughs of almond blossom waving above their heads and dropping pink petals about them, and along to the new recreation park a mile away. And then Mr. Saunders saw that Mr. Babbicombe was walking along by their side.

Holding his plate over the middle of the table to be helped, he suddenly seemed to lose control of his fingers.

Mr. Saunders's heart gave a great thump, and his mind made a great decision. . . .

"You aren't very amusing to day, are you?" said Sissie, presently.

"I WON'T have it," said Mr. Saunders very fiercely to himself in his little attic bedroom after Sissie had gone. "I won't *stand* it."

The next day he went quite privately to a scholastic agent, and two weeks afterwards he booked his passage to Toronto.

The YOUNG MAN by Stacy

IT was a characteristic August day in an English seaside town. The rain was coming down in torrents, and a cold east wind was driving in mad gusts down the esplanade. Bedraggled posters clinging limply to the water-logged band-stand intimated that the band of the Second Blimpshire Rifles should at that moment have been playing light fantastic airs, but the poor thing seemed hard put to it to keep its stance on the beach at all, and there were no bandsmen in evidence. A few people with umbrellas, mackintoshes, and red noses struggled along the front, less as though they were out to enjoy themselves than because they found the interior of their lodging-houses intolerable. From the congested rows of *en pensions*, boarding-houses, furnished apartments, and small private hotels came the sound of gramophones, tinkling pianos, and the yelling and squalling of children, chafing at their confinement. The deserted pier was lost in the driving mists of sea and sky. It had been raining for three days.

In the drawing-room of Miss McQuinty's boarding establishment on the Marine Parade a young man was writing a letter home to his mother. He was a good young man, as may be judged by the fact that he had written twice to his mother within a week. His name was Joe Mills. The atmosphere of the room was not conducive to good letter-writing and he appeared worried. Three elderly ladies were sitting on chairs in the bay window, knitting and talking in querulous whispers. A fat man was asleep in a chair by the fireplace. Two small children of indeterminate sex were playing a noisy game in the corner, whilst an angular woman with a slight down on her upper lip kept shouting at them not to do whatever it was they were doing. Joe Mills continued to bite his pen. His letter had got as far as this:—

"*My dear mother,—*

"*Everything going on all right tho' the weather has been pretty bad. It has been*

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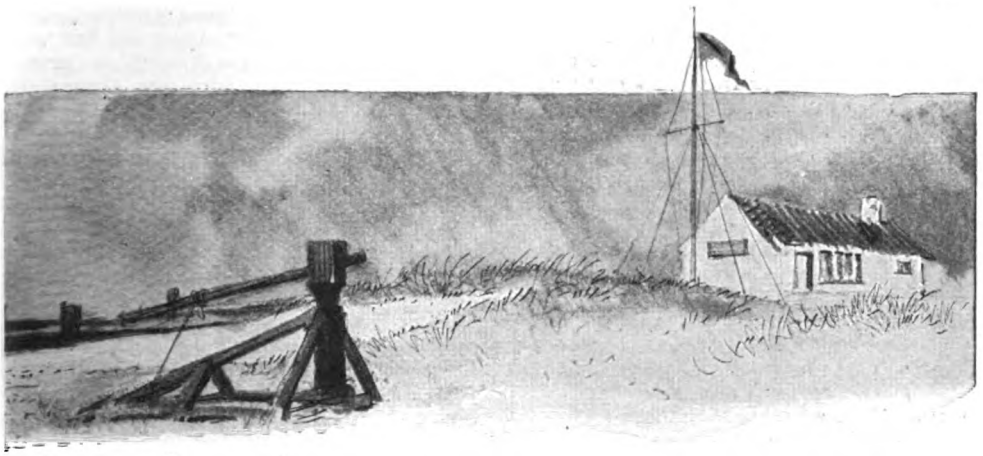


who WROTE HOME to MOTHER

Aumonier

ILLUSTRATED BY H.M.BROCK R.I.

raining since Tuesday. I hope you are all right, and that Mrs. Parsons is looking after you properly. The mac keeps the rain out of the upper part, but I have to keep on changing my trousers as they get wet at the bottom. I went to the pictures on Tuesday and saw 'The Woman Pays.' It was very nice, but there is not a change of programme till next week. The people here are very nice, and this is a very nice house. . ."

One of the children in the corner had apparently bitten the other, for there was a yell, and the woman with the down on her lip screamed out: "Lizzie, how dare you! Stop biting 'er ear, or I'll take you upstairs and whip you."

The trouble eventually quieted down, but Joe Mills could not think what else there was to tell his mother. The fat man awoke with a fit of coughing. And he heard one of the old ladies say:—

"It was his kidneys, you know, in the end, dear."

Someone next door was picking out a tune on the piano. The room seemed to smell of damp clothes and yesterday's cooking. Joe looked round, and a sudden doubt disturbed him. He had made up his mind that it was a nice house and that the people were nice, but was it? Were they? In any case it was a change from Snaresbrook and the office in Fenchurch Street. If only the sun would shine!

He looked around the room. The wall-paper was a pale green, patterned with festoons of pink roses. The furniture was mahogany upholstered in dark green plush. Over the fireplace was a coloured oleograph of King George and Queen Mary in full Coronation regalia. On either side were framed photographs of Lord Kitchener and Lord Roberts. On the wall opposite was a gilt mirror with paintings of chrysanthemums in the panels, a water-colour of the Swiss Alps, and a photograph of Lincoln Cathedral. On a gilt easel in the corner, and draped in plush and lace, was an oil painting of two collie dogs. The whole thing was what is known as elegant, but was it really—"nice"? Was it really anything to write home to mother about?

Joe was perhaps a little handicapped in his judgment by lack of experience. His own mother's rooms in Snaresbrook, although perhaps a little less elegant, were not dissimilar to this in style and taste. He had not been in the homes of people who do

things differently, but he was conscious of an abrupt stab of doubt. He didn't like it. If only those children wouldn't make that infernal row! If only the old ladies would —jump out of the window! or the fat man burst and fall into the fireplace! There would in any case be something to talk about and reflect upon. But he simply could not think. His mind was a blank. He looked at the black and gold clock on the mantelpiece and it indicated twenty minutes to seven, but as it had apparently never worked for its living during its career (being far too elegant for such a menial task), he glanced at his wrist watch. It was five minutes past four. Five past four. In another twenty-five minutes that awful function of tea would be solemnized. A gong would sound, and some fifteen people or so would congregate. They would suddenly appear from all kinds of mysterious places, and they would sit all round the long table in the dining-room, staring at plates of bread and butter and little cubes of bright yellow cake. And Miss McQuinty would say :—

"Now, Mrs. Smith, I hope your tea's to your liking. Did you say two lumps, Major Highborrow?"

It suddenly occurred to the young man that he couldn't stand it. He must have a change of some sort. He would go out to tea, and hang the expense. His mother's letter could wait till the evening. He closed his writing pad and took it up to his bedroom, where he changed into his drier trousers and socks. He then put on his hat and mackintosh and, gripping his umbrella, plunged out into the rain. There was in any case an element of excitement in "having tea out." He would see fresh faces and breathe a different atmosphere. He walked into the town. There were several tea-shops and refreshment-rooms, but they did not appear very attractive. He hesitated outside one that was more sumptuous than the others, but the sight of a crowd of people inside disconcerted him. He was a shy young man.

He returned to the front and walked eastwards. Biddingate-on-Sea was no particular size, and in a quarter of an hour he found himself at the end of the esplanade and walking along the sea wall. He had decided to forego tea altogether.

He clung desperately to his umbrella as though it were the only friend he had in the place, as well it might be. The sea wall tailed off into a strip of common land, which he crossed, picking up the wall again the other side. The cold fresh air raised his spirits. This was in any case better than sitting in those stuffy rooms, listening to strangers. Pleasant little ideas coursed through his brain. He thought of his mother He would have liked to have had her with him, but she was too delicate to travel and then, of course, there was always the expense. He thought to himself :—

"A mother is rather like an umbrella. She protects us when we are in trouble. But when the weather is fine, or we are out to enjoy ourselves, we leave them both at home."

He was pleased with this reflection, pleased and a little sad. He walked on for nearly an hour. The sea wall had ended, and he crunched his way along a track beside the pebbles. And suddenly he beheld a low, lime-washed building standing well back from the beach. There was nothing special about the building to attract anyone's attention, apart from the fact that it had a shop-window and a flag-staff, and there was some kind of notice written up outside. Joe Mills was feeling very wet around the ankles, and he was beginning to miss his customary cup of tea. It immediately flashed through his mind that this might be a possible place, and he made his way thither. On approaching near enough to read the notice, he was agreeably surprised to find that his conjecture proved a correct one. The notice said: "Tea and light refreshments."

AS he pushed his way through the door a bell clanged crazily. When he had shut it and stood facing the room the first thing that struck him was that there was in any case no occasion for shyness, for the place was deserted. The potentialities with regard to a comfortable tea, however, were not inspiring. It was a most dispiriting room. A few iron tables were set around with wooden chairs. On only one was there a cloth, and that was not too clean, and was covered with crumbs and the other untidy remnants of an uncertain meal. The windows were adorned with lace curtains that gave the impression of having been half-devoured by flies. On the wall was a stuffed fish in a glass case, a framed statement that "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not Want," and a handwritten injunction that "Visitors are requested not to pick neither the fruit nor the flowers." This seemed to him a startling request, as on his approach to the house he had seen neither fruit nor flowers. Doubtless these blessings of the Creator were in a garden at the back.

But facing him was a counter, and this undoubtedly gave the key-note to the kind of refreshment he was likely to obtain. There were piles of biscuit tins, large circular bottles of highly-coloured sweets, a few plates of cake somewhat similar to that

obtainable at the boarding-house, and in the centre the remains of a joint. Something about the joint fascinated him. He realized that it was the relics of a leg of mutton. The bone down the centre stood out white, like a bleached bone that one might find in the desert. At each end of the joint were little patches of brown-grey meat. It seemed to be there as an epitome of the phrase "as dead as mutton." He could not in any way connect it with life. It must in any case have been all that was left of some forlorn sheep that died from anæmia in a remote colony, and had been frozen for years before being allowed to tickle the palate of the British public. A few listless flies and bluebottles were hovering around it, or staring at it apathetically from the security of the dish, as though they suspected that humanity was playing them a dishonest joke.

He waited for several minutes and nothing happened. Then he coughed and tapped rather timidly on the counter. And still nothing happened. He was hesitating whether to tap louder or to beat a retreat when the clanging of the bell at the back of him warned him that someone else had entered. It proved to be a small and very grubby boy, who came in sucking a stick of pink and white sweet. The boy stopped and scowled at him, still continuing to suck. As the boy was apparently something to do with the shop, Joe at last said :—

"Er—is anybody at home ?"

The small boy appeared to regard this as some kind of menace, for he sidled towards the counter, keeping his face to Joe, and then made a sudden dive and disappeared ! There was a sound of shouting out at the back, and in two minutes' time a tall, gaunt woman came in, wiping her hands on a coarse brown apron. She regarded the visitor with an expression that combined astonishment with venom.

"Could I have some tea ?" Joe asked, plaintively.

Without answering directly she muttered in a gruff voice :—

"Fancy on an afternoon like this !" Then added : "Tea ! No, no tea to-day. We've let the fire out. You should have come at the proper time."

He answered : "Oh, what a pity ! Is there anything I can have ?"

"Ginger-beer and lemonade."

"I'll have a bottle of ginger-beer, please."

"Anything to eat ?"

"What have you got ?"

The woman looked along the counter as though the variety of her stock needed no advertisement. Then she said :—

"Got a nice bit of cold mutton."

Joe gallantly tried to suppress the shudder that passed through him, and interjected quickly :—

"What about cake ?"

"Rock cake, Genoa, biscuits, anything you like."

"Rock cake, please."

WHEN the woman left him, with his ginger-beer and rock cake, at a table amidst somebody else's crumbs, he began to meditate. He first of all meditated upon the true significance of the meaning of the word "rock cake." He had never realized before that a rock cake is indeed a cake made of rock. In it were embedded a few currants, that gave the appearance of small petrified black-beetles. He struggled manfully, and sipped the ginger-beer, which wasn't so bad. After all it was a change from the boarding-house.

And then once more he began to meditate upon his mother.

After all, wasn't it rather mean to have come away like this for a nice holiday at the seaside and left his mother behind at Snaresbrook ? It was true she had insisted upon it. She had said that he *must* go, that he needed the change, and she didn't ; and that she was more comfortable at home. But he knew that at the back of that dear head was the thought of expense—expense, always expense. When the father died, all those years ago, the little capital he left brought in nearly three hundred pounds a year, which seemed sufficient in those days. But many of the investments had depreciated, and for a mother and son to live on about two hundred a year at the present day means struggle, pinch, and going without.

Well, well, he was nineteen now, the world before him. He was earning twenty-five shillings a week in a tea merchant's office. He would get on. He would be successful, and buy his mother all the comforts and luxuries she desired. Tea ? Yes, he would one day be a great tea merchant himself, with plantations in Ceylon, and he would go out there with his mother, and she should bask in eternal sunshine.

Tea ! Yes, it seemed a funny thing that, although he was going to be a great tea merchant, he could not get a cup of tea himself on "an afternoon like this." What did the ridiculous woman mean ? If ever there was an afternoon when tea would seem welcome it was this. Let's see, what was it his mother had said in her last letter about the rooms ? Oh, yes, she thought of making alterations while he was away. She thought of making the box-room into her bedroom—"It would be quieter there"—and converting her bedroom into an annexe of the sitting-room by taking away the

connecting partition. "There would be more room to move about." But all this, he knew, was a mother's ruse. He knew the suggestion was only because it would make it more comfortable for him. The sitting-room was so crowded. His own bedroom was full of furniture and knick-knacks. She wanted him to have a room of his own, a comfortable room, where he could have his desk and books, and be cosy in the evening and undisturbed. And his own bedroom then would be more comfortable as well. And so to attain this end she would sleep in the dark little box-room. "It was quieter there." . . .

No, no, he couldn't allow this. He must protest in his letter this evening. And he would have to be very tactful. He must set guile against guile. . . . Clang! He was startled out of his meditations by the sound of the entrance bell. He looked up and beheld a strange figure by the door. It was a man in oilskins and sou'wester. To say that he was wet was only to say what one would expect. But he was more than wet. He was deadly pale, and water seemed to be oozing out of his eyes, nose, and mouth. Even Joe, with his limited experience, could see that this was not merely the wetness caused by rain. The man had come out of the sea!

Joe jumped up and said: "Hullo! I say!"

Instinctively he caught hold of the man, who was reeling about, and pulled him on to a chair. The man panted and wheezed in his grasp, and was unable to say anything for some minutes. Indeed, he was unable to speak before the woman entered the shop, and when she did enter Joe was subtly aware of her difference in attitude towards the stranger from her attitude towards himself. She hurried up to him and exclaimed:—

"Oh, sir!"

The half-drowned man at last managed to splutter:—

"Wife's on beach—'xausted—near'y drowned—boat capsized—fishing—send f' my car—quick—God's sake——"

The woman cried, "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

She seemed to lose her head. She was all alone in the house except for the small grubby boy. Joe said at once:—

"Shall I go, sir?"

The man looked at him and patted his forearm, as though acquiescing, and after a few more gasps he said to the woman:—

"Tell him."

"But it's four miles to your house, sir," the woman wailed. "He may be too late. It's four miles to Biddingate, too. Oh, what shall we do?"

The man suddenly thrust out his arm and pointed to the corner of the shop.

"Bicycle!" he gasped.

"But it's an old one, punctured in both wheels, sir," she said.

"Never mind," said Joe, eagerly. "Tell me where the place is, and I'll ride on the rims. It'll be quicker than walking."

The man nodded approval and indicated to the woman to give the necessary information. Somewhat reluctantly—or so it appeared to Joe—she said to him:—

"This is Sir Bernard Gilspite. His house is Ockwood Manor, at Broadsheet. If you go out at the back and walk a hundred yards you'll come to the road. You go to the left and it turns inland. When you get to a cross-roads you take the one that says Lennox and Broadsheet. It's four miles. Oh, dear, oh, dear!"

Joe ran to the corner and snatched up the bicycle. Just as he was leaving, Sir Bernard, who was getting his speech back, called out:—

"Try and bring Dr. Rolls—tell you at house—quite near—and thank you very much."

IT was an extremely painful ride for Joe Mills. He sometimes wondered whether it wouldn't have been better to have thrown the bicycle away and to have tried running. But his better judgment told him that this method of travelling would in any case be bound to save a good many minutes, and even one minute might save a human life. At every pressure on the treadles the bicycle seemed to go bump, bump, bump. The rain was pouring down his neck and his trousers were wet through. He was wearing his mackintosh, but he had tied up the lower part round his waist. He came to the cross-roads without meeting a soul, and took the road to Broadsheet. Although it was still pouring in torrents, the sky was becoming perceptibly lighter. He passed one or two farm carts, and field labourers with sacking over their heads. One of them was good enough to tell him that he had a puncture, and he said:—

"Yes, I know, thanks," and raced on.

There was something exhilarating in this ride. He felt heroic. He tried to remember a poem he had once read called "How they took the good news from Aix to Ghent." He could not remember what the good news was, but there were three men on horseback, and they did the journey heroically. It was not good news he was taking. It was bad; but there was something heroic in taking it. The muscles of his calves ached abominably. The perspiration was streaming down his face and body, adding

The man suddenly thrust out his arm and pointed to the corner of the shop. "Bicycle!" he gasped.

to the general humidity. He had gone three miles and was beginning to feel thoroughly exhausted. Passing a field of which the gate was open, he swerved to avoid a horse that was being led out by a man. His front wheel struck a stone, and he was pitched head-first into a ditch.

He picked himself up, and the man gave him some advice about looking where he was going to. He was more concerned with the bicycle, the front wheel of which was buckled. He asked the man politely the way to Ockwood Manor at Broadsheet, and on obtaining directions he left the bicycle in the ditch and began to run.

It seemed to him a good omen that by the time he had reached his destination the rain had ceased. He panted up to the front door and rang the bell. After what appeared an age, a dignified butler opened the door. Without any preliminaries Joe shouted at him :—

"Sir Bernard and Mrs.—er—I mean his lady — have had an accident — nearly

drowned. He sent me for the car and the doctor. The lady is very bad. Quick,. he says."

An expression of disturbed surprise clouded the butler's face. It was the kind of irruption he found distasteful. He liked things to go on calmly and smoothly. But the urgency of the implication was not to be disregarded. He said :—

"Oh ! wait a moment."

He disappeared, and came back after a minute or two with a housekeeper, who wanted the whole situation re-explained. When she thoroughly understood, however, she appeared to display more initiative than the butler. She telephoned to the garage, collected brandy, smelling salts, bandages, hot-water bottles, and rugs. She called out to Cecile, Lady Gilspite's maid, to put on her things and be prepared to go in case she was wanted. Whilst waiting for the car she even thought of offering the

He picked himself up, and the man gave him some advice

messenger a drink, an offer he courteously refused, on the grounds that he "never touched anything." Within ten minutes the car was on its way to the doctor's. The doctor, of course, was out on his rounds, no one quite knew where.

"Never mind," said Joe, "let's get on. We can bring them back."

He had quite taken charge of the expedition.

Half a mile down the road, however, they met the doctor in his two-seater. On hearing the news, he immediately volunteered to accompany them. The two cars raced seawards. It seemed incredible to Joe, after his laborious journey, to make the return trip in about five minutes.

Sir Bernard rushed out to the gate to meet them. His immediate interest was centred on the doctor.

"Ah, Rolls," he exclaimed, "thank God you've come!"

about looking where he was going to.

They all entered the refreshment-room. Sir Bernard and the doctor went into the inner room, where Lady Gilspite was lying down on a couch. She was very bad. The proprietress of the establishment was snuffling and thoroughly enjoying herself. What a terrible thing it was. She was sure her ladyship could not recover. She "looked like death." Sir Bernard had carried her up from the beach by himself. She was quite unconscious.

Joe sat there waiting. His eye caught sight of his half-eaten rock cake. It reminded him that he felt terribly hungry. Even that would be acceptable. If it weren't so—well, in rather bad taste, indelicate, he would have finished it up. After all, he had paid for it! But no, he put the temptation behind him. The maid was sent for. Nearly half an hour passed. There were feeble moans from the other room. A good sign, no doubt. It suddenly occurred to Joe, why should he wait? His mission was accomplished. If he started back now, he would get home in time for "late dinner" at the boarding-house. He had only waited because he might be required, but he could tell by the signs and portents, and the maid's face who came into the room now and then, that the lady was out of danger.

He said suddenly to the proprietress:—

"Well, I'll be getting on."

She said: "Oh, will yer? All right, then."

He picked up his hat and went out. The evening had cleared up. The sun was beginning to set, and there were rifts of blue between the golden ridges of scudding cloud. He walked hurriedly back and regained the sea wall. He trudged along gaily for nearly half a mile, when suddenly he heard

the loud toot of a motor horn. He looked back and saw a car on the road, which ran parallel to the wall. A man in the car was waving to him. He hurried across the pebbles, and on nearing it he recognized the doctor.

"Sir Bernard wants you to come back with me," that gentleman called out.

"Anything gone wrong?"

"No. Everything's quite all right. Jump in."

"But I—I don't know—I'm wet through—I——"

"That'll be all right. He'll fix you up. He said I wasn't to let you go under any circumstances."

Joe got in, and in ten minutes' time was driven up to Ockwood Manor. Sir Bernard met him in the hall.

"Ah, that's right, young man!" he exclaimed. "I didn't want you to run off like that. I never even thanked you. Come upstairs and I'll get you a hot bath and a change of clothes. I want you to stay to dinner. Tell me your name."

THERE was something imperious about the conduct of these arrangements and instructions that was irresistible. In a few minutes he found himself splashing about in the hot water of a most luxurious bath, fitted up with all kinds of contraptions he didn't know how to use. In an adjoining dressing-room he found laid out for him a complete change of underclothes, linen, shoes, and an evening dress suit. It was an alarming moment. He had never worn evening dress before. He was terrified that he would give himself away. Also, did it mean that there was going to be a party? He dreaded parties and people he didn't know. Perhaps he had better slip out and vanish. But he couldn't put on his horrid wet clothes again, and he couldn't steal Sir Bernard's dry ones. He would have to face the thing out. He dressed with deliberate care, and was not displeased with his appearance when complete. Fancy if his mother had seen him!

Well, was he supposed to go down or wait till he was fetched? The sound of a gong seemed to solve the problem. He hurried down. There was no one about except the butler. He wandered about the hall, wondering what he ought to do. The butler opened a door and said:—

"Would you like to wait in here, sir? Dinner will be in about twenty minutes."

Twenty minutes! Then what did they want to ring a gong for? What a room! He had never seen anything like it. All white panelled, and huge damask curtains, old rugs, several Chesterfields, little gilt chairs, and a grand piano that seemed to be lost in the distance. And the wonderful silence of it! He had never *felt* silence quite like this. He went to the window and looked out into a garden upon a terrace overlooking a park. He spent a happy twenty minutes examining all the beautiful things about him, and listening to the silence. And he thought of the boarding-house where they would now be feeding. "Where is Mr. Mills to-night? Miss Wilkins, do you take cabbage?"

Another gong went, and in a few minutes his host entered.

"Ah, here we are, Mills! Let's go in and see if there's anything to eat. We shall be alone. My wife's not up to coming down. But she's going on well."

Joe was intensely relieved to find it was not a party. His host was an easy person to get on with. During the early shy stages of the meal he took the opportunity to examine him. He was a man of about fifty, with iron-grey hair, a square strong face, and kindly brown eyes, which nevertheless had a penetrating quality, like a kind-hearted vulture.

It seemed strange to Joe that two men dining together should put on evening dress, and that there should be a written menu, and all kinds of things with queer French names to eat.

Sir Bernard made him tell him all about his ride on the rims of the old bicycle, and being pitched into the hedge. He seemed tickled at Joe's account of how he ran the last mile.

When the dinner was over, and the butler had put the port and smokes on the table and retired, Sir Bernard lighted a cigar and said:—

"Have a glass of port, Mills. It will do you good."

Joe was a tectotaller, but, like many others, he regarded port as a teetotal drink. He sipped it like a connoisseur. It was certainly very good.

"Now tell me what you do, my boy."

Joe told him. When he had finished, Sir Bernard said:—

"H'm! h'm! Beggs, Beattie, and Co., Fenchurch Street. Yes, I know them. Do they treat you well?"

"Well, I don't know, sir. I think so."

"Does anyone there—one of the heads, I mean—take a personal interest in you?"

"N-no, I can't say—I don't think so."

Sir Bernard pondered, and appeared to be examining his guest closely. At last he said:—

"Now, look here, Mills. I feel under a debt of gratitude to you. Indeed, I'm not sure that you didn't save my wife's life. I'm a business man, too. Are you fond of work?"

"Have a glass of port, Mills. It will do you good." Joe sipped it like a connoisseur. It was certainly very good.

"Yes, I'm keen to work, sir, and get on."

"Good! I have no children and I regard work as my child. If you like to come to me—and work, I will see that you get on. You are young, and you have character, and I don't think you're a fool. I'm not in tea; I'm in cotton. I made my way up in the world, and when I say a thing I mean it."

Cotton! How do they get cotton? Of course, they grow it. Fields and fields of small white plants—something like napkins growing on sticks? Fields and fields of it in some foreign climate—India, wasn't it?—and his mother lying in a hammock on a sunlit balcony, being waited on by coloured servants. He said:—

"I should like it, sir. But I don't know much about cotton."

"We will soon teach you all that you need know. Come and see me at my office when you get back to town. I will give you an appointment, and start you straight away."

He took out a notebook and made an entry.

"What salary are these tea merchants paying you?"

"Twenty-five shillings a week."

"Well, I'll start you on two pounds ten, and we'll see how we get on. Let's go into the library and have a smoke, and then I shall bundle you off home early. I think we are all pretty tired after our adventures."

And they went into a library that seemed to be built of solid walnut, and to be crowded with books right up to the ceiling. And his host told him of his life and early struggles,

and of his adventures abroad, and enlarged upon the romance of the cotton industry. At half-past nine he ordered the car. To Joe's surprise when about to take his leave, he found a portmanteau waiting in the hall. By some miraculous process all his clothes had been dried and neatly packed. He tried to express his gratitude for the hospitality he had received, but Sir Bernard patted him on the shoulder.

"The boot is on the other foot, my boy. You come and see me in town, and we'll see what can be done."

During the drive on the way back his mind became obsessed by one reflection. There really was something to write home to mother about! How should he tell her? What would she say and think? As he neared the boarding-house another reflection came to the forefront. Here he was driving up to the boarding-house in a large car. It was not yet ten o'clock, and when he appeared he would be in evening dress! Whatever would the people think? Probably nobody before had ever appeared there in evening dress. He wouldn't be able to face it. Fortunately he had his mackintosh. He leant out of the window and asked the chauffeur to stop at the corner of the street. There he alighted and, gripping his portmanteau, hurried in. As luck would have it, he ran straight into Miss McQuinty.

"Oh, Mr. Mills," said that lady, "we thought you were lost! You weren't in to tea or dinner."

"No," he answered. "I've been spending the evening with friends."

He sneaked up to his room and changed all his clothes. Then he went down to the drawing-room. He wanted to finish the letter to his mother, and he had neither pen nor pencil. There were the same old crowd, about a dozen of them. The children had gone to bed, but the three old ladies were still knitting in the bay window, and the fat man was yawning in the easy-chair. Fortunately the writing table was unoccupied, and he sat down. He opened his writing pad and re-read the letter he had started. He paused at the last line:—

"The people here are very nice, and this is a nice house . . ."

He bit his pen and looked round. His eye alighted on the oleograph of Lord Kitchener, frowning at him disapprovingly. He heard one of the old ladies say:—

"Well, my dear, I got them at the Stores for three and eleven-three."

How could he tell his mother all this? The adventure would sound to her bizarre, fantastic. Besides, suppose he told her and *it didn't come off!* People sometimes said things they didn't mean. But Sir Bernard? No, he could hardly believe that of him. But still—suppose he told her, and she counted on it, built up dreams and hopes, and then—— It would be unbearable. Wouldn't it be better to wait till the thing materialized? Besides, wouldn't it be so much nicer to *tell* her than to write to her? Expressing oneself in a letter is so difficult!

He dipped his pen in the ink and looked around. Two men near him were arguing about whether Germany should be allowed to join the League of Nations. The voice of a giggling girl at the back of him said:—

"Oh, my dear, you would have screamed! You should have seen her!"

He wrote:—

"Later. The weather cleared up nicely this evening after all, and we had a fine sunset. Please don't change the rooms, mother; I rather fancied that box-room as a place to keep my desk and books one day. You know, a kind of 'den.' But there's plenty of time, so don't do anything about it till I get home. Have you seen anything of the Browns, or Uncle George? I thought he was looking pretty bad last time I saw him. You know, washed-out. Too many Masonic dinners, eh? Well, mother, take care of yourself. I hope you are all right, and not overdoing it. I shall be back on Sunday. I am feeling awfully fit. The holiday is doing me no end of good, in spite of the weather.

"Ever your loving son,

"JOE."

He put the letter in an envelope and addressed and stamped it. Then he went quietly out. He had a curious distrust of the boarding-house letter-box, and so he walked up the street and posted his letter at the corner. The night was cool and clear. The dead old moon gazed blankly at the earth, but the stars were signalling to each other—promises of all the fine things that should happen on the morrow.

WHEN he returned he again encountered Miss McQuinty.

"Well, Mr. Mills," she said, "have you had a nice day?"

"Yes, thank you, very."

"That's nice. We like all our guests to have a good time. Good night!"

"Good night!"

TOURING with MUSICAL GENIUSES

ELMAN.

TETRAZZINI.

CARUSO.

MELBA.

YSAYE.

KUBELIK.

KREISLER.

HISLOP.

HEIFETZ.

Caruso, Melba, Tetrazzini, Kreisler, Heifetz, Elman, Ysaye, Kubelik, Hislop —I have played for them all.

By

PERCY KAHN

THE FAMOUS ACCOMPANIST

ALL accompanists learn in time to be humble, and an amusing incident that happened during a Mischa Elman concert in Detroit, U.S.A., shows how necessary that quality is.

Included in the programme was the Beethoven Sonata in C minor, to be performed by Elman and myself. The first movement was no sooner over than a fussy old gentleman hurriedly left his seat and, falling over people's knees in his haste, made his way to the manager's room. "Look here!" he exclaimed in excited tones when he arrived there, "you go and tell that little pianist not to play so loud. I want to hear more of the violin."

The manager, Mr. Defoe, tried to placate him. "Well, you know," he said, "they are playing a sonata for the piano and violin. and one instrument has as much to say as the other. At times, in fact, the piano has to predominate."

"I don't care a ——," was the angry reply. "I paid my money to hear the violinist—not the pianist."

And I shouldn't be surprised if he did. But the incident illustrates in a striking way a rather common conception of the *rôle* of accompanist. I suppose there are few teachers of pianoforte playing who are not very familiar with the fond parent whose desires are expressed in this fashion: "You know, Mr. ——, I do not wish my daughter to become anything very exceptional. As long as she can play accompaniments, and that sort of thing, I am sure it will be——," etc., etc.

Well, I have not found accompanying the casual kind of accomplishment that is implied by this attitude. On the contrary, it is an art in itself, making the utmost demands upon one's technique, powers of interpretation, and general alertness. Only years of special study and experience can qualify one to play the most difficult music at sight, to transpose it at a moment's notice, to catch instantly its mood, and, throughout a long piece, to maintain a perfect musical *entente* with the soloist.

But it is work of fascinating interest, and it has brought me in intimate contact with all the great musicians of the world. Caruso, Melba, Tetrazzini, Kreisler, Heifetz, Elman, Ysaye, Kubelik, Hislop—I have played for them all, and my travels have taken me to the four corners of the earth.

Naturally, many remarkable experiences have fallen to me. There is one that comes vividly back to my mind to-day, for it concerns an event that had never happened previously, and will, quite possibly, never be repeated. It took place after a morning concert in Berlin, at which Ysaye had played the Elgar Concerto for the first time under the famous Nikisch.

The programme concluded, several of us adjourned to the flat of Carl Flesch, a well-known violinist in Germany, and there we were surprised to meet the great Kreisler, Mischa Elman, and Ysaye himself. At that time Ysaye had never heard Elman, and with a wave of the hand he said: "Oh, the youngster must play for us."

Elman was without his violin, and was loath to perform on a strange instrument, but after some persuasion he agreed to use the Stradivarius owned by Flesch. He played the Tschaikovsky Concerto, and I accompanied. At its close Ysaye rose with tears streaming down his face, and, going to Elman, kissed him on both cheeks. "A master! A master! A great master!" he exclaimed, his voice quivering with deep emotion.

Then Kreisler, caught by the enthusiasm of the moment, sprang to his feet and suggested that he and Elman should play the Double Concerto of Bach to my accompaniment. I think this was the greatest joy I ever experienced. Surely no two such artistes had ever been heard together before. How their instruments sang and answered each other, filling the room with their rich music, I shall never forget.

Ysaye was obviously moved by the wonderful performance. He was almost exhausted by his exertions of the morning, but the divine music of the players seemed to galvanize him into activity. Leaving the table, which was still as the others had risen from it after lunch, he insisted upon playing the Fourth Concerto of Vieuxtemps from beginning to end. Kreisler went to the piano, and, remarkable as it may seem, accompanied him throughout from memory.

Flesch brought the concert to an end with an exquisite rendering of Nardini's Violin Concerto. Truly an astonishing feast of music, and only made possible by a combination of circumstances of the rarest kind. The cost of bringing such artistes together on a public platform would have been so huge as to make the task absolutely out of the question. Yet here they were, in these simple surroundings, playing just because something within them impelled them to play. It was a day to be remembered for all time.

I HAVE figured on many occasions in memorable little concerts at the houses of famous musicians. A dinner party for intimate friends after an exhausting evening of playing or singing for the public is by no means uncommon, and this may be followed by music that is not always "highbrow." After all, relaxation is good for everybody.

Personally, I like a little rag-time for a change. During the war I both played and sang it at over fourteen hundred concerts arranged for soldiers, wounded and otherwise, and somehow Dame Nellie Melba heard of my reputed skill in the art. While I was in Australia she invited me to her house one evening, and among those present were Miss Rosina Buckman, the well-known *prima donna*, and her husband, Mr. Maurice D'Oisly. I was asked for rag-time, and without hesitation I complied. I sang "The Dixie Bazaar."

No one seemed to enjoy it more than the great Melba herself, and before long she was swaying to and fro in her chair to the lilt of the music. Then the climax came. Before she could realize what was happening, I had lifted my foot and played the final note with it.

Melba jumped up in consternation. "Oh, my piano!" she exclaimed, excitedly. "My poor piano!" But she quickly appreciated the humour of the situation, and laughed

heartily. It was a magnificent new instrument, which had cost a fabulous sum, and I would not have injured it for worlds.

I had gone out to Australia with Mr. and Mrs. D'Oisly, and in due course we went on to New Zealand. I had previously been in communication with Toscha Seidel, the famous violinist, with a view to a tour, but the project had to be abandoned. Judge my surprise when I arrived at an Auckland hotel to find that Seidel and his mother were already there. Mrs. Seidel took me in her arms and kissed me — perhaps Russians are less formal than we are—saying: "Oh, how pleased Toscha will be to see you! Go down to him at once." I ran to his bedroom as fast as my legs could carry me. He was in his pyjamas, and when he saw me he stood as if rooted to the spot. "Well!" was all he could exclaim. We threw our arms round each other, and rolled over and over on the bed in our excitement.

Mr. Percy Kahn.

I found New Zealand an astonishing country. I was preparing for bed one night (while we were on a visit to Rotorua and the surrounding district of boiling geysers and mud pools) when there was an earthquake. The whole hotel seemed to rock, and the bedstead clattered about the room in a most disconcerting manner. I never had such a fright in my life; I felt sure that my last moments had come. Running into the corridor, I shouted for help. Someone told me that everything would be all right, whereupon I said: "Fancy D'Oisly sleeping through it all!" "I'm not," came the cheery response from the next room. "I'm very much awake, but what's the good of worrying?" All the same, he never forgot the terrifying experience.

One more New Zealand incident is worth relating, because of its rich humour. It occurred at a Rosina Buckman concert at Wellington. Miss Adelina Leon, 'cellist, who was assisting, found it necessary to tune her instrument before she went on the platform. So she asked the attendant who usually opened the piano to give her the "A." Then she wondered if he knew which note the "A" was. When she put the question to him, he airily confessed that he did not know, but it would be all right, as he would give her a few to choose from!

One of the most charming personalities of the musical world was Caruso. He was always geniality itself, and to be associated with him was a sheer delight. I played for him many times. Among his greatest admirers was Queen Alexandra, and often he and Elman and I used to go down to the residence of the late Marchioness of Ripon, at Coombe Court, Kingston-on-Thames, and entertain Her Majesty there. Sometimes, in the rush of things, Elman and Caruso were unable to rehearse beforehand, but they overcame this difficulty by practising in the motor-car during the journey.

I remember one visit to Coombe Court particularly, for it was the first time in my life that I had a Royal "fag." When Caruso was called upon to sing, I went to the piano with him, but found that the seat was rather uncomfortable. In her characteristically gracious way, Queen Alexandra quickly asked me what the matter was. "Is the seat too low?" she questioned. I replied that it was.

Immediately she pointed to a flight of steps leading out of the room. "If you do not mind running up those stairs, Mr. Kahn," she said, "you will find a cushion." I did so, but to my confusion I found the cushion was tied to its place. I did not know what to do to release it, so I went back. "What is the matter?" the Queen asked again. I told her. Then she turned to the King of Portugal and said: "Do go and get Mr. Kahn a cushion." He promptly solved the difficulty, and as I began my playing I felt that there must be few accompanists who had had such kingly assistance.

Caruso's good nature was proverbial. I had a striking proof of this in connection with the making of a gramophone record of the "Ave Maria" that I composed a few years ago. He had himself invited Elman to play the violin part while he sang, and the three of us met for the ordeal in New York. Caruso was conscientiousness itself in everything he undertook, and the first record had to be cancelled because he was not satisfied with his singing.

We tried again, and this time Elman was not pleased with his rendering. We made four attempts before we obtained a perfect performance, and at the close I was so carried away by my enthusiasm that, forgetting myself for a moment, I clapped my hands wildly and shouted: "That was simply splendid!" As I had not waited until the process of recording had stopped, all our efforts were spoiled. I looked at Caruso with a certain amount of fear and

trepidation, but to my relief he joined heartily in the laughter. Then, regardless of fatigue, he proceeded to sing the song for the fifth time.

He had a great admiration for the "Ave Maria," and sang it frequently at his concerts. He told me that a famous critic had once observed to him that surely only a sincere Catholic could have written such beautiful and devotional music. "You are wrong," said Caruso. "It was *un piccolo Israelita*" (a little Israelite).

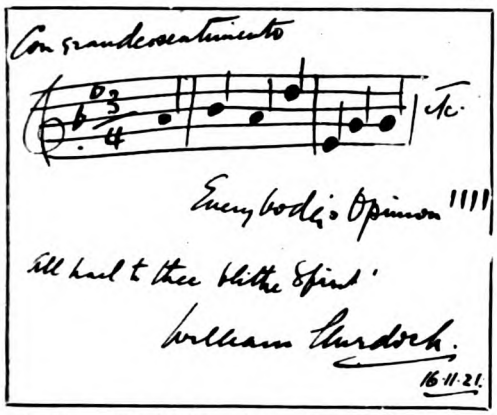
Speaking of gramophone records reminds me of a story that is too good to remain untold: A man went into a gramophone store and asked for a record by Caruso and Harry Lauder. "I'm afraid you've made a mistake," said the assistant, "for there is no such record in existence." "I know there *is*," replied the man, "for I heard it only last week; but, if I remember rightly, it had a peculiar title." "Oh, perhaps you mean 'La forza del destino,' sung by Caruso and Scotti?" asked the assistant. "That's right," answered the man; "some people call him Lauder and some call him Scotti." I told Antonio Scotti, the renowned baritone, this story in New York, and he was exceedingly amused.

I have paid many visits to America, notably with Elman. He, also, is a great stickler for detail, and he would practise in all kinds of out-of-the-way places. While we were at the Knickerbocker Hotel, in New York, we had a fine large room, containing a grand piano, in our suite. On the morning of a concert we both rose fairly early and, still wearing our dressing-gowns, rehearsed the pieces we were to play. Sometimes our friends were present on these occasions; more than once Pavlova and Rachmaninoff casually strolled in, and, taking chairs, were silent listeners to the music.

On the morning of a concert Elman and I both rose fairly early and, still wearing our dressing-gowns, rehearsed the pieces we were to play.

When in Petrograd I had the great pleasure of accompanying that truly amazing violinist Jascha Heifetz, then only eleven years old. Even at that tender age his playing so astonished his hearers that some moments elapsed before any of us could recover our breath to speak.

Great artistes differ enormously in temperament. Some are calm and impassive whatever the circumstances; others, more



At first sight William Murdoch's contribution to Percy Kahn's autograph album appears to be innocent enough, but its meaning is evident on reading the notes: A B A D E G G.

highly strung, are swayed by their emotions to an extraordinary extent, reacting instantly to the ardour of an appreciative audience. Perhaps I may quote a rather striking incident that occurred at the Albert Hall, London. It was a Tetrazzini concert, and the *prima donna*, as is always the case, was greeted by a perfect tornado of applause when she appeared on the platform.

She bowed and bowed, and still the deafening clapping and cheering went on. I saw that she was profoundly moved. At last she was able to proceed with her singing of the Polacca from "Mignon," in which she has to trill on the top B, and then mount to the E in alt. She managed the B with ease, trilling magnificently, but her emotions had so overcome her that the E failed to eventuate.

I perceived her dilemma, and was walking off the platform when she rushed after me, dragged me back, and, asking me for the chord, repeated the trill and sailed up to the E faultlessly. This simply electrified the audience, and for a few moments there was wild excitement and enthusiasm.

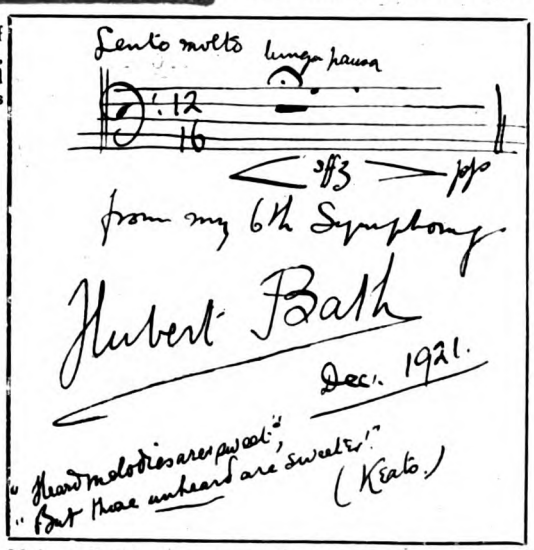
Curiously enough, there was another remarkable incident the same afternoon. While Mr. John Dunn was playing some difficult chord passages at the end of the Tartini Variations, he had the mortification of seeing his bow snap at the head. The hair dangled down, and I must confess that I thought there was no alternative but a graceful retirement. There was a look of despair on the face of the violinist, but he quickly recovered his composure, and astonished the audience by continuing the piece to the end with the stick alone.

Twenty-five years as an accompanist! It seems a long time, and I can recall much hard work during that period. But I can also recall numerous pleasant memories. Of many of the famous people I have met I have tangible mementoes, which I hold in the highest appreciation. Perhaps I may make particular mention of two of them.

One is a wonderful pair of cuff links bearing the Russian Imperial crown in diamonds on heliotrope enamel. This was the gift of the late Czar when I played before him, his mother (the Dowager-Empress), and his daughters at his palace in Petrograd. It is sad to think that, with the exception of the Dowager-Empress, all who were present on that occasion have since been murdered.

Another greatly treasured memento, quite extraordinary in its way, I

A caricature of Percy Kahn, drawn by Edmund Dulac, the famous artist.



Hubert Bath's clever contribution to the autograph album is referred to on the following page.

suppose, is my autograph album. It is packed with the autographs of every notability in the world of music, and I should blush to repeat the absurdly nice things these people have said about me.

Some of them, as in the case of Ysaye, Backhaus, and Kubelik, have hastily scribbled down bars of their favourite compositions. Others have found in music somewhat original sources of humour. It is impossible, for instance, to avoid being amused by the effort of William Murdoch, the well-known pianist. His contribution takes the form of two bars of music. At first sight it appears to be innocent enough, but its meaning at once becomes evident on reading the notes : A B A D E G G (A BAD EGG). Underneath Murdoch has facetiously written : "Everybody's Opinion !!!!"

Hubert Bath is another of the musical humorists. Making neat play with Keats's lines :—

"Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter,"

he has written a bar of music containing nothing but a rather prominent rest mark, with a long pause, and a diminuendo and crescendo. Then he adds the words : "From my Sixth Symphony."

There are many autographs of people who have achieved fame in other walks of life—notably Lord Jellicoe, Lord Marcus Beresford, Lord Burnham, Sir Ian Hamilton, and Edmund Dulac, the last-named adorning my book with an extraordinarily clever caricature of myself, drawn from memory.

Of autographed portraits of musical celebrities I have scores and scores. They completely cover the walls of my room, and form what is probably the finest private collection of its kind in the country. It is no exaggeration to say that hardly a single musician of note is unrepresented.

If I am asked why I became an accompanist I can only reply that I can never quite determine. I know that as a boy I was said to have a soprano voice of unusual quality (some people described it as resembling that of a *prima donna*), and that my services were sought for choirs by such eminent musicians as Sir George Martin, Sir Frederick Bridge, and Sir Walter Parratt, Master of the King's Music. Even at twenty-one my voice had not broken, and I was known as "The Boy Soprano."

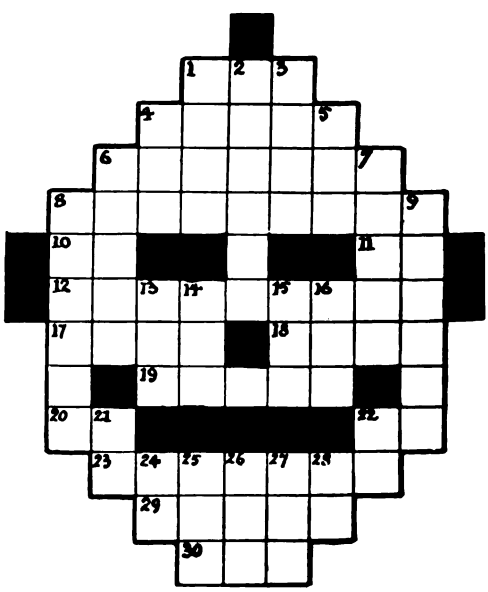
But throughout my youth I had been studying the piano, having impressed Sir George Grove so much with my playing when I was ten that he provided me with a teacher, and gradually I seemed to concentrate my attention on the art of accompanying. Since then I have come to love the work. Many delightful experiences have been mine, and I shall hope in the years to come to have many more.

PERPLEXITIES.

— By —
HENRY E. DUDENEY.

738.—THE CROSS-WORD CLOWN.

THE Cross-word Puzzle, that has come over to us from America, is a curious craze, and it will probably die as rapidly as it has sprung up. Its only new feature is the arbitrary blocking out of certain squares, and it has occurred to me that this might be done in more fanciful ways. As an example, I give a portrait of our old friend, the Clown. The words defined begin at the numbers and go horizontally or vertically, as the case may be, and stop at the blacked-out squares. Every blank square has to be filled with a letter. HORIZONTAL. 1. A fruit. 4. A boat. 6. Conflict. 8. "An excellent substitute for butter." 10. For example. 11. A drink beheaded. 12. Answers. 17. A knot. 18. A throw. 19. A sail. 20. Therefore. 22. Either. 23. An English county. 29. A well-known boxer. 30. A poet. VERTICAL. 1. To cultivate. 2. A youngster. 3. The mark. 4. A conveyance. 5. A period. 6. A conveyance. 7. Ideal gardens. 8. Military dinners. 9. A season of the Church. 13. "The" in foreign language. 14. Exclamation of disgust. 15. A congealed liquid. 16. A grain. 21. Surmounts. 22. Slang for all correct. 24. Belongs to. 25. A tear. 26. From. 27. Open. 28. Behold.



739.—DIVIDING BY ELEVEN.

If the nine digits are written at haphazard in any order, for example, 4 1 2 5 3 9 7 6 8, what are the chances that the number that happens to be produced will be divisible by 11 without remainder? The number I have written at random is not, I see, so divisible, but if I had happened to make the 1 and the 8 change places it would be.

740.—A BURIED PROVERB.

There is a complete proverb buried in the following sentence: "While there are very many as kind as this, they know no task unkind." As every word of the proverb is buried in its proper order, it follows that if you write out all the successive buried words that you can find, they should soon disclose the proverb, however unfamiliar it may happen to be.

741.—THE PERPLEXED BANKER.

A man went into a bank with 1,000 sovereigns and 10 bags. He said, "Place this money, please, in the bags in such a way that if I call and ask for a certain number of sovereigns you can hand me over one or more bags, giving me the exact amount called for without opening any of the bags." How was it to be done? We are, of course, only concerned with a single application, but he may ask for any exact number of pounds from £1 to £1,000.

742.—A CHARADE.

My *whole* is a woman. Woman is my *end*, was my *beginning*, and you will always find her in my *midst*.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

733.—SWASTIKA MAGIC SQUARE.

17	5	13	21	9
4	12	25	8	16
11	24	7	20	3
10	18	1	14	22
23	6	19	2	15

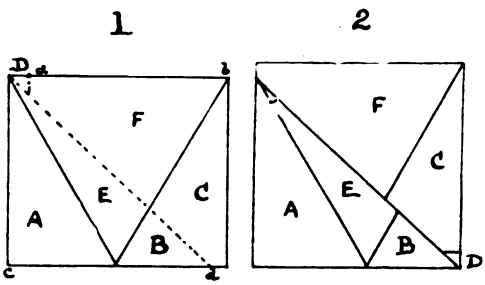
It will be seen that the square is perfectly "magic" and that all the prime numbers are placed within the swastika.

734.—A LEGACY PUZZLE.

The fractions, $\frac{3}{5}, \frac{1}{5}, \frac{1}{10}, \frac{1}{15}$, equal $\frac{18}{30}, \frac{6}{30}, \frac{3}{30}, \frac{2}{30}$, which together make $\frac{29}{30}$, which is greater than unity, but the legacies were to be in the "*proportions*" of those fractions. Therefore, the widow receives $\frac{18}{29}$ = £5,333 6s. 8d., the first-born $\frac{6}{29}$ = £1,600, the second-born $\frac{3}{29}$ = £800, and the brother $\frac{2}{29}$ = £666 13s. 4d. But the sting is in the tail, and the question is indeterminate until we learn just *when* the twins were born. Tommy was actually born just before 2 a.m. on 21st September last, immediately after which time the clocks were set back an hour, summer time being ended, and Freddy was born a little after 1 a.m. "by the clock." So we have the curious paradox that the first-born was born later than the second-born! Freddy therefore only receives £800.

735.—TRIANGLES AND SQUARE.

Cut one triangle in half and place the pieces together as in Fig. 1. Now cut in the direction of the dotted lines, making a b and c d each equal to the side of the



required square. Then fit together the six pieces as in Fig. 2, sliding the pieces F and C upwards to the left and bringing down the little piece D from one corner to the other.

736.—A PUZZLE WITH CARDS.

Arrange the pack in the following order face downwards with 9 of Clubs at the top and 5 of Spades at bottom: 9 C, Jack D, 5 C, ace D, King H, King S, 7 H, 2 D, 6 S, Queen D, 10 S, ace S, 3 C, 3 D, 8 C, King D, 8 H, 7 C, 4 D, 2 S, ace H, ace C, 7 S, 5 D, 9 H, 2 H, Jack S, 6 D, Queen C, 6 C, 10 H, 3 S, 3 H, 7 D, 4 C, 2 C, 8 S, Jack H, 4 H, 8 D, Jack C, 4 S, Queen S, King C, 9 D, 5 H, 10 C, Queen H, 10 D, 9 S, 6 H, 5 S.

737.—MISSING LETTERS.

By inserting repetitions of the letter a we can get the following:—

At Ararat an Arab sat and sang a Saga ballad.

Man was an ass, a maniac, as sappy as a salad.

THE SPOILER

by

AUSTIN PHILIPS

ILLUSTRATED BY F. E. HILEY

COMING up into the narrow High Street from the Belboro Bath Club beside Severn, Agnes Waterhouse—wife of one of the local doctors—turned to her friend, Rosalind Atterbury.

"You still swim like an otter!" she said, admiringly.

"Do I?"

"Rather! Just as you did when you represented the old High School in that mile race against the College boys, and won it easily. Good-bye, old thing—and I only wish matters were brighter for you. It's most horribly worrying about your husband, and I'm dreadfully sorry about Denzil!"

"Yes, it is pretty upsetting. Good-bye, Agnes. Thank you so much for the nice lunch and for taking me to the swimming club!"

The two women shook hands warmly. Then, as they still stood looking at each other with real and lifelong affection, the doctor's wife added this after a couple of seconds of hesitation:—

"By the way, did you see that announcement in yesterday's *Belboro Echo?*"

"About Arthur Feltringham?"

"Yes, and his coming out of Parkhurst Prison one day next week. What do you think he'll do, now he's free again, Rosalind?"

"Live comfortably on stolen money!"

"You think he's still got any?"

"Oh, yes, some of it—absolutely certainly and unquestionably. You don't suppose that with that cunning, planning brain of his he didn't foresee his crash and make some sort of secret provision for himself. Well, good-bye again, my dear. It's no use cursing Fate, is it? When one is utterly and hopelessly beaten, one simply has to make the best of things!"

The speaker turned away swiftly, leaving Mrs. Waterhouse to insert a Yale latchkey in one of the fan-lighted front-doors of the Foregate. Five minutes later Rosalind Atterbury had begun to climb the long ascent to her cottage on the extreme outskirts of the old city.

She walked proudly, vitally, magnificently, with head held high and fine clear grey eyes shining as though she had never had a care nor encountered any sort of trouble. Not a soul who did not know her intimate history could have guessed from her appearance that she had sustained a monster-stroke of Fate some seven years ago, when certain old Belboro families had been whelmed in the ruining waters of the failure of a large local bank whose managing director had deceived his colleagues hopelessly, so that her father had died of shock and left his family penniless, while her husband—a famous county batsman and brought up to no job—had been obliged to take to clerking and was now in failing health through long confinement in an ill-ventilated office warmed with water-pipes.

No one, either—even among those who thought they knew her—could have even begun to realize the passionate resentment which was burning in her or the pent-up

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forces of her nature—unless it were her former head mistress, who had divined her remarkable qualities and had urged her to adopt some profession. Married at eighteen scarcely, and to-day the mother of a boy of seven, Rosalind Atterbury was even now twenty-six only—not yet in the full pride of her splendid womanhood, though superb in her character and physique.

She reached her tiny home—from which her little son, Denzil, and her husband, Roy, were both still absent—and began to get their tea ready. And all the time something strange, something fierce and strong and potent, something still largely subconscious, was burning, seething, boiling, bubbling up within her—something which spoke these words to her as she set out cups and cut bread-and-butter: "He is coming out next week; he who has despoiled you and ruined you—that 'damned smiling villain,' Arthur Feltringham—while you go ill-dressed and while your child's future is inhibited and your husband's health is slowly undermined!"

Roy Atterbury came in presently—the merest shadow of the man who had once hit three "sixes" in succession on the Belboro ground against Kent in a single over. Then Denzil entered—healthy and fine of limb, flaxen-haired, blue-eyed, typically Saxon—from the Dames' school which he ought to leave now to go to Stratheden House at Blackheath (where his father had been and all his uncles), and then later on to Rugby instead of to the local Grammar School, which was ill-endowed and badly run. . . . . .

Rosalind sat looking at them—filled with a passionate eagerness to help them and half distraught at her utter impotence to be of any real service—while the distant hum of the city came in through the windows, which were both wide open, for this Midland air was stifling, and indeed a great drought had been parching the Severn plain for two full months now without a single hour of intermission. . . . .

"Only three days to Saturday!" she heard her husband say presently with heartfelt thankfulness—and, alas! also, with that dry and ominous little cough of his. "And then Cornwall and the Atlantic! You'll like that, won't you, Denzil?"

"Rather! Has Auntie Vi a big house there?"

Husband and wife exchanged glances. The three were going down as paying guests to her sister, who had a small Army hut on a little cove and who lived on a pound a week and occasionally sold a story to women's papers. It would not be much of a change for Rosalind, for it, of course, still meant housework, but it would be good for her dear ones (oh, how tenderly she loved them!), and then——

She caught her breath noticeably. A lightning-like intuition seemed to come to her. Her eyes gleamed. Her head went up; and her husband looked at her in amazement.

"What on earth is the matter?" he asked, almost anxiously.

Rosalind shook her head reassuringly. But she did not answer him. She could not. An electric spark seemed thrilling through her. An idea—and such an idea!—had come to her. It had crystallized suddenly—as these things do sometimes crystallize—through the fusion of those classic emotions, jealousy, hate, anger, and love—so much the strongest and greatest of them—which are the primitive eternal forces which move human beings and drive them to do and dare bigly.

For five minutes, ten minutes, she said nothing. Then, with beating heart and throbbing pulses, she came across to her husband and put her arm round his shoulders.

"Roy," she began, breathlessly. "You do love me?"

"Rosalind!"

"Well, if you do, I want you to trust me wholly and to promise me two things, darling. The first is, that I may sell that dresser (she pointed to a piece of old furniture which they had kept because it so fitted their tiny dining-room). Laverton has offered us thirty pounds for it often—and we can replace it for ten with a decent modern imitation!"

"All right, if you wish it. You know I've suggested the same thing myself, several times. But what is the second request?"

"The second!" (Rosalind was about to say that there was a third also, for she had just remembered something, but thought it better not to ask it.) "The second is, that you and Denzil should go without me to Cornwall!"

"Go to Cornwall without you!"

"Yes, old thing. I want you to trust me to the extent of letting me take a full fortnight's holiday away from you. Nothing much may come of it. Nothing probably *will* come of it. But to have the idea I have and not to use it would be a crime against you and Denzil, and black treachery to my love for you both!"

THREE days later the express train from Paris drew into the station of Quimper: that old Armorican city which is the Exeter of Western Brittany.

From a second-class carriage stepped a handsome, striking-looking Englishwoman. It was Rosalind Atterbury—full of vitality as always, despite her long night journey.

Hardly had her feet touched the platform when a plump-faced, plumper-bodied woman with hair dragged up tightly from the nape and wearing the high coif of the Bigouden country, rushed up to her and flung warm and affectionate arms round her.

"Mademoiselle!" she cried, happily. "No, I should say madame! Oh, it is so good to see you!"

"And you too, Marianne. So you got my telegram safely!"

"Why, yes, madame—and left St. Ménolé early this morning to come and meet you!"

Rosalind nodded her great pleasure. She stood awhile, looking at this woman, once a maidservant at Le Pouldhu (a bathing village near Pont-Avèn which her family had visited for years, annually), and now a widow and inheritress of the hotel which Marianne's late husband had purchased at St. Ménolé in Penmar'ch, the French "Lizard." She had known the Breton woman as a girl and had once saved her from drowning, and Marianne had always been devoted to her, though they had not met since Rosalind's marriage and the loss of her money in the bank failure.

The careful scrutiny left her satisfied. Quickly she took the Bretonne's arm.

"Let us talk!" she half whispered. "There is a *café* close handy?"

"At the Hôtel de la Gare, madame!"

A minute later the two women were seated in the sunshine at a round-topped table, just across the road from the station. When the waiter had brought them coffee, Rosalind hastened to explain.

"Marianne," she said, "I am here on a serious mission. You know that many English come year after year to Brittany—as we used to come!"

"Why, assuredly, madame!"

"Well, years ago—before you left Pouldhu or thought of marrying Jean Pouliquen—an Englishman, named Arthur Feltringham, used to visit St. Ménolé, where he had a little villa. He became a thief—an *escroc*—afterwards, and he robbed a great many people. He is now about to be released from prison, and I desire to keep a watch upon him!"

"Here, in Quimper, madame?"

"No. Chez vous—at your own hotel at St. Ménolé—for I believe that it is to St. Ménolé that he will return, for I know he loved it dearly, indeed passionately, and because he is now an outcast in his own city and native country—and you know, too, how the hare which has been chased by hounds returns always to the 'form' from which it first started. I suspect him of yet further evil. That is the reason of my coming here. But it would be fatal to my purpose if he recognized me!"

"And so you wish my help, madame?"

"Yes. I want you to give me a place as *bonne* at your hotel—in case he comes there—and to let me clean his bedroom and wait at table. Surely it will be easy, Marianne? Am I not dark enough? Shall I not make a good Bigouden woman?"

The plump-faced Frenchwoman's brown eyes sparkled generously; and it was obvious immediately that not only would she help, but that the idea and the imbroglio gave her pleasure.

"*Mon Dieu! Oui, madame!*" she answered eagerly, and sat looking at her whilom rescuer delightedly. "I will help you gladly. Surely you are as dark as we are and——"

"And you will dress me *en Bretonne* and coif me *à la Bigouden?* There is a shop for such costumes at Quimper?"

"Many such shops, madame!"

"Then take me to one, Marianne. Take me on the instant and buy clothes for me, and then carry back your new *bonne* to your hotel."

IN the crowded dining-room with its two long central tables and its big carafes of cider, Rosalind Atterbury was standing behind the chair of a gluttonous Dutch sea-painter, whose glass asked perpetual refreshment.

God! How bone-tired she was; how utterly hopeless and dispirited; how completely vanished was her enthusiasm! Ten dreary days had passed. There had been no sight nor news of Feltringham. The hours, the minutes, the seconds even—all were full of disappointments. Only the thought of her dear ones and her high, firm purpose to help them now kept her in Brittany, though she had begun to fear terribly that the strange, swift intuition which she had at first held sheerest inspiration was in sorry fact the shallowest mirage.

Then as, this hot September evening, she reproached herself most bitterly for having sold that dresser and for having wasted the handsome proceeds on that maddest of impulses which had brought her here, there came a sudden commotion.

People were entering the dining-room—for the Quimper and Pont L'Abbé trains had arrived. Mechanically she began to scan their faces, as she had so long done so fruitlessly at each meal.

And in a flash all her weariness went from her and her heart, first stopping and then leaping forward like a runner, beat hard and high with splendid optimism.

For among these new-comers was the man in search of whom she had crossed the seas to St. Ménolé—Arthur Feltringham, the

ex-banker, just discharged from Parkhurst Prison.

The first batch of diners was dispersing and he found a seat immediately: he who had ruined so many of the nicest people in the old city of Belboro—he, that "damned smiling villain," still smiling behind his gold spectacles: little altered, only a trifle thinner, having doubtless smiled his way into hospital and good graces of chaplain and governor.

Rosalind's joy was almost insupportable. Then she remembered anxiously that her task was at its merest first inception, and that the difficulties and obstacles—perfectly frightful ones—were still in their entirety ahead of her.

In a flash she was at his side with the soup-bowl. And as he helped himself with the immense ladle his eyes—smiling no longer but surely quick and suspicious—rested on the pseudo-waitress's splendid figure, beautiful features, dark hair, and grey eyes.

She thrilled to the marrow with apprehension. It was the supremely critical moment. Would he recognize her? Calm outwardly, but within trembling violently, she tried to reassure herself by insisting that she had been a girl only when he had last seen her, and that she was now a woman, much matured.

Then his gaze dropped and he began eating. Rosalind, reassured greatly, watched him closely and observed him very nervous. Speedily she guessed the reason. He was anxious, wildly anxious, as to the success of his visit to St. Ménolé. Would he act immediately or wait till morning? She prayed fervently that it might be to-night, when watching would be so infinitely easier.

"Roy, I want you to trust me wholly and to promise me two things."

Later she brought him coffee on the *terrasse* which looked out across the broad Atlantic on a wide field of rocks across which ran a concrete path to the six-hundred-yards-distant lighthouse which rose high and castellar on an island-spur of granite. She saw him sniff the salt air as one who loves it and returns to taste it after exile. She felt him look hard at her again—not as one who is suspicious, but rather in the manner of a man who rejoices at the sight of a beautiful woman after years of prison celibacy.

Later, as she aided in the clearing of the dining-room tables, Mme. Pouliquen entered from the bureau.

"It is he!" Rosalind whispered, taking her aside quickly and pointing through the open window at the gold-spectacled profile on the *terrasse* just outside it. "He came in by the late train from Pont L'Abbé! What room have you given him?"

"*Mon Dieu!* Twenty-seven! But I will make excuses to him and alter it. He shall have sixteen—next your own. It is, of course, still vacant, as we arranged together!"

The *patronne* hurried away to speak to Feltringham, who left the *terrasse* and went upstairs with her. When, a few minutes later, he came down again he walked straight up to Rosalind, who was serving a fisherman in the *café*.

"*Marie!*" he said, using the generic name given to all maid-servants in France. "I have decided to go out for a long walk, as the night is such a beautiful one. I may be out quite late. At what time does the hotel close?"

"At ten, monsieur. But you have only to ring at any hour and François, the garçon, will come down and open the front door to you."

Feltringham nodded and looked hard at her, as though very conscious of her beauty. Then he turned away and—with beating heart, for she was aware that impatience and anxiety were impelling him—she saw him start upon his errand. She saw, also, something of hard outline altering the shape of his jacket pocket—and she knew beyond question what it was.

It was between the mainland and the rock-field which divided St. Ménolé from its lighthouse that the ex-banker first began to wander. But the woman who watched him from the window of the hotel dining-room knew in very certainty that, though he took this course in the fading daylight, it must be somewhere inland that he would make for when darkness had fallen.

She would have given most things to have followed him. But the land—for miles—was so barren and so absolutely destitute of cover that this was simply impossible.

For a long time she remained looking after him. Then, at last, her self-constituted duties as waitress and chambermaid com-

She was out of bed on the instant and peering through the communicating keyhole.

pleted, she went upstairs to Number Fifteen.

But not to sleep—though she undressed and got into bed speedily. She lay awake, listening intently, waiting till such time as Feltringham should come in and go to the room adjoining, which was divided from her own in the usual French fashion by a locked communicating door.

Hours passed. One struck; two struck; and a terrible fear took hold of her lest her quarry, having found what he had come for, should bolt from the neighbourhood without returning. But at last the big bell pealed; and she heard François go downstairs and return accompanied, and then footsteps in the room adjoining.

She was out of bed on the instant and peering through the communicating keyhole. Not in vain did she look—and certainly not useless to him had been Feltringham's much-prolonged outing.

For on the floor was lying the stout trowel whose shape she had discerned in his jacket pocket before he had started on his errand. Beside it—he was kneeling—on a sheet of newspaper whose whiteness made his earth-soiled hands look filthy, she was aware of a rusty tin thing which looked like a small cash-box but was flatter, and then saw him rise, and go to his suit-case and take from it a strong chisel.

Speedily he had prised the lid open. With feverish fingers he found documents wrapped round and round in oilskin paper. Rosalind, kneeling there with hair on end and skin gooseflesh, recognized them instantly as Bearer Bonds: things of great value, negotiable as coin in any country.

There were six of them. And as she watched the "damned smiling villain" finger them tenderly and lovingly, as though the sight of them had taken away all sting and stain of his past *débâcle*, Rosalind realized to the fullest that this man who had done such wrong was still young relatively and had years of vigorous life in

Speedily he prised the lid open. With feverish fingers he found documents wrapped in oilskin paper.

front of him, and that he could live where he chose in happy ease.

Presently—when he had feasted his eyes on them sufficiently—he re-wrapped the retrieved hidden treasures and put the package into a large pocket-book and placed it underneath his pillow. He began to undress. Rosalind, realizing that she too needed sleep if she were to carry through her task to its completion, started to go towards her bed.

She rose half-thoughtlessly—her mind intent on future action—and her shoulder struck the door-handle, making as it seemed to her a great noise. She remained where she was, terror-stricken, for another full twenty minutes, and only then dared to move again.

It was long before she slept. Certainly she had been justified in her intuition that the spoiler had had his cache in this wind-swept corner of old Armorica. But mere knowledge without stern deeds to help her dear ones was going to be of very small avail.

"HE stays!" said Marianne Pouliquen next morning. "He stays fifteen days to reinvigorate himself, and says he loves Penmar'ch of old and thinks to build a villa here. Is he really bad, madame? He looks so kind and smiles so nicely! But you must know him, surely, if he is a compatriot of yours. Have a care, I beg of you, lest he harm you before you have found out what you came to discover!"

Rosalind reassured her old friend—who knew nothing of her real purpose and who believed she had some special mission to watch Feltringham on behalf of the authorities in England. And now, after a night spent in thinking, she had formed a definite plan of campaign.

Feltringham stayed upstairs till midday (gloating, surely, in secret over his retrieved, new-excavated securities). At the meal she watched him guardedly, fearing greatly that the noise which she had made last night might have aroused his suspicions—not of her, but of people in general. Yet such did not seem to be the case.

On the contrary, she saw him looking at her in quite another fashion. It was as if (though not in the least recognizing her, dressed *en Bretonne*) he was more than ever conscious of her beauty. Frankly, he made eyes at her. This confirmed her plan and hardened her purpose. It was hateful—but her best, her surest way.

Their eyes met challengingly when again she took him coffee on the *terrasse*. He smiled. She smiled. He spoke.

"You are of this country, mademoiselle?" came his question.

"Yes, monsieur!"

"You are very handsome!"

"Monsieur thinks so?"

"Naturally I think so. You go out for walks, *Marie?*"

"Sometimes, monsieur!"

"This afternoon?"

"*Si*, monsieur!"

"Then I shall hope to see you. I am going to sit over there presently!" And he pointed to the great field of weed-clad rocks between the land and the shining white lighthouse and looked at her meaningly, significantly.

There was a pause: some twenty seconds of silence in which Rosalind, hating the necessity, forced herself to flirt with him for the sake of Roy and Denzil and the future. Then, finally, having smiled back at him again with the definite silent promise to give him rendezvous, she left him—to wait on other guests.

Later, when everybody had drifted from the dining-room and the tables had been cleared again, Rosalind went up to her bedroom and for a full half-hour lay prone and motionless, gathering strength and renewing energy for the great ordeal in front of her.

Then she rose and took from her suit-case her husband's automatic pistol, and having filled its chambers with cartridges, she slipped the thing into her pocket. She had not asked Roy for it, but had taken it without letting him know that she had done so. For the loan of it had been that third request which at the last moment she had refrained from making to him lest he should become frightened, guess what she was risking, and refuse to let her set out.

From her window she could see someone sitting in the sunshine in the very centre of the rock-field. The task which lay before her—and above all the moments which must precede it—was hateful and odious to her almost past all dwelling upon. Firm, though, to her purpose, she embarked on it for the sake of her husband and her son.

She ran downstairs finally and walked out of the hotel and, crossing a stretch of sand, began to saunter down a concrete path which the keepers—whose barracks were on shore—had to traverse when going to and from the lighthouse.

Long before she reached Arthur Feltringham she could see that he was eagerly waiting for her. He waved from his cranny and she waved back immediately, as though pleased to know that he expected her.

He rose now, greeted her, started joking with her, and, beside her, sauntered slowly forward till they came to a point of rock which was higher than the rest and which afforded room for two in an angle, sheltered from the wind and hidden from the sight

of those alike on shore and in the lighthouse. There they sat down in the warm sun.

Feltringham began to pay her compliments. She was more beautiful than all the Bigouden women in Penmar'ch, he told her. And very soon he became quite impassioned.

" You're too good—much too good to be wasting your life as a mere hotel servant ! " he said, amorously.

" Do you really think so ? " she answered, managing to smile at him.

" Yes, yes, of course you are. I'm going to lease or build a villa somewhere between here and Le Forêt. Will you come along and look after me ? "

ROSALIND smiled at him again and sat silent. In reality she was screwing up courage to take her automatic pistol out of the right-hand pocket of her silk apron and to thrust it in the face of this scoundrel and to demand a sum of money—not all his secret hoard by any means, but enough to buy a cottage or to put up a comfortable hut in the wine-like Cornish air where Roy could live and recover and whence Denzil could go to Blackheath and afterwards on to Rugby. That he had the Bearer Bonds with him she felt absolutely positive from the bulge at the breast of his jacket.

Then, her mind screwed up to the vital point of action, she slipped her right hand downwards.

She could have shrieked aloud an instant later. For the apron pocket was empty. A nervous movement was inevitable. As she made it, she raised her face—which had been bent upon her shoes in sham demureness—and found herself looking down the barrel of the missing pistol, which was now in Arthur Feltringham's right hand.

" So you thought you were going to hold me up ! " hissed the " damned smiling villain," grinning hideously.

" Hold you up ! "

" Yes, Rosalind Atterbury. Do you think I don't know you ? I thought I recognized you last evening, directly I came into the dining-room, but it didn't seem possible that you could be in St. Ménolé, dressed *en Bigouden*, and even when I heard that noise in the bedroom next to mine I didn't really suspect anything, and I thought you really were a peasant till we sat down here together, when your idiom, added to the likeness, made me dead certain whom I was talking to. I suppose you got at the *patronne* so that you could work an opportunity of blackmailing me ! "

Rosalind did not answer him. It was, for the moment, impossible. Long, long before she could begin to get balance enough to say anything, Feltringham poured out yet more scorn on her.

" Now I've got you ! " he went on, sneeringly. " You'll just clear right out of St. Ménolé within twenty-four hours or I'll take this revolver to the gendarmes and tell them that you came here to rob me of money which is mine—mine absolutely. I'm a free man, not a convict. You can't claim a copper of what I buried here. It is you, not I, who are the criminal—just a common thief, a tough, a blackguard gunwoman ! "

He hurled out still filthier abuse now ; frankly, starkly, blackly, foully villainous. As for Rosalind, she sat listening without protest, feeling utterly impotent to say anything or to attempt to stay his insults. The surprise had so staggered her that she had lost all heart for the time being. She was checkmated utterly, knew that she had made herself cheap uselessly, felt with utter broken-heartedness that through haste or carelessness she had lost for always her great chance to help the two she loved.

And Arthur Feltringham ceased presently, just sitting holding that revolver, calm again completely, once more the " damned smiling villain " who had wrought such harm and brought such misery to so many innocent fellow-creatures. His companion remained motionless, as though paralysed, even as if be-spelled by some foul serpent. Then, suddenly, amid the dead silence in which the one was revelling and the other suffering the tortures of a soul in Hades, a curious sound—which till now both had been too preoccupied to notice—came fearful and ominous upon their senses.

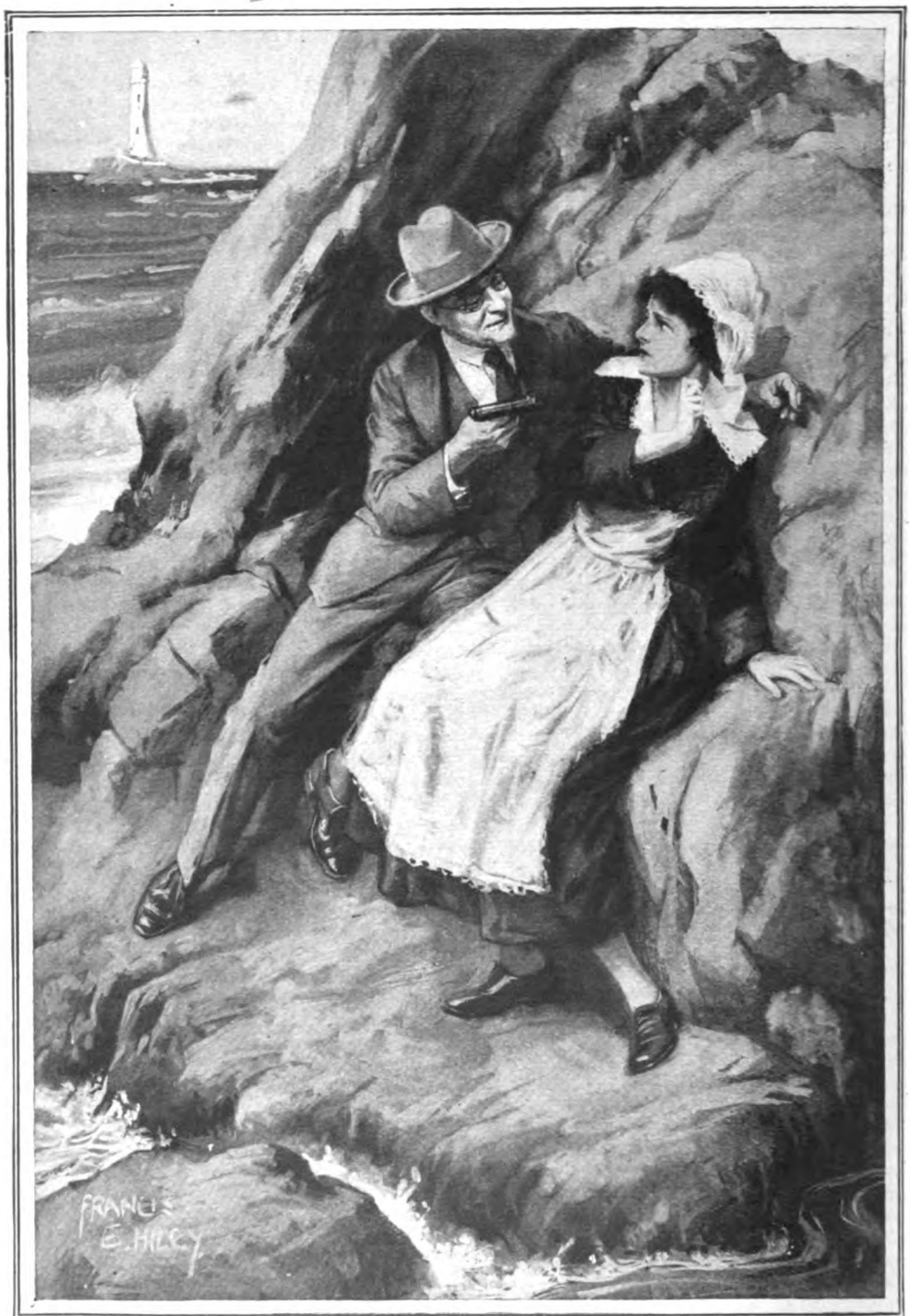
It was a slow suck-plash and plop-plopping and then a quick wash-wash and a swirling. Both rose. Both took a quick step forward and looked down from the crag-like throne which they had been occupying. Then—defeat, resentment, hate, dejection, all forgotten in a common danger —Rosalind gave an anguished cry.

" The water ! It's all round us ! We shall be drowned if we don't swim for it ! "

But Arthur Feltringham did not answer her. He knew too well—what he had forgotten as he sneered at his snared fellow-victim—the terrors of this tide of St. Ménolé which comes up like a millrace to engulf the whole low-lying rockfield and to separate mainland and lighthouse. He kicked away his shoes. He tore off his coat and flung it backwards so that it fell at Rosalind's feet.

In a flash she saw her chance. Like lightning she stooped and snatched out the letter-case. An instant later she had thrust it in the bosom of her dress and had dived, grazing her head dangerously as she touched water, swimming hard in the direction of the mainland, a couple of hundred yards distant.

She rose to get breath presently, and



As she raised her face, she found herself looking down the barrel of the missing pistol.

across the swirling flood there came the voice of the defrauding banker from the rock pinnacle where he still stood, cursing her. Then something sang close to her and splashed and ricochetted just ahead in the swirling, boiling waters. Before she dived deep into safety, other shots had followed the first.

Again she rose. Again a bullet sang near to her. Again she dived: once more she came to the surface, and, turning, saw the rock peak now unoccupied, and the sea without sign of her enemy. A strange qualm seized her—a foolish yet generous anxiety; and she trod water for a minute or two, lest his head should show and he need helping. But he was not anywhere visible. At last, slipping off the Breton skirt which had begun to make her movements very, very difficult, she struck out for the shore like any otter. And the tide which had betrayed her now befriended her, bearing her to the land beneath the barracks which the lighthouse-keepers occupied by day.

ON the following Sunday a handsome woman, of magnificent physique but moving very, very wearily, got out of the London express at Belboro station. She took a taxi to her cottage—to find it empty, for her husband and son were out walking.

When they returned, an hour later, she greeted them very quietly and sat down with them to tea, herself eating nothing, contenting herself with ministering to them while she watched them with infinite love and tenderness, though absolutely exhausted by achievement and conscious with it all how nearly she had failed, and how different—if a man's aim had been straighter—would have been the end of her adventure.

"You had my letter from St. Ménolé, explaining that I was going to be detained there longer than I had expected, Roy, darling?" she said, presently.

"Yes, we got it all right. But we were awfully surprised at the postmark and wondered how you had got there at all, and why you never even told us you were going to Brittany—and felt awfully hurt and anxious about it, didn't we, Denzil?"

The child nodded most emphatically. His mother bent and kissed him, put something black upon the table, and then thrust a hand within her husband's.

"What's that great fat book beside your plate?" Denzil asked, turning to her suddenly.

"Something that's got something inside it that some day is going to help you, darling!" she answered quietly, taking up the pocket-book and opening it, and taking some folded papers from it and passing them across to her husband.

Roy Atterbury examined them, removing the oilskin paper in which they had been wrapped so extremely carefully. Then he gasped his amazement. Each of them—there were six in all—was an American Rail Bearer Bond, worth approximately five thousand pounds.

"Good God! Rosalind! Where did you get these?" he cried.

"From the man who once ruined us!"

"Arthur Feltringham?"

"Yes. Listen!"

Rapidly, in a whisper, she told him everything—save one thing. He listened, interjected, marvelled, looked at her in joy and admiration, and then gave voice to his one anxiety.

"My dear," he said, "you're wonderful, magnificent. Your vision, your purpose, your execution of your plan, your whole conduct of the thing surpasses criticism. But Feltringham is an able fellow. He will never rest in poverty. Won't he take immediate steps to get these securities back from you?"

"Never!"

"Why not?"

"Because — because" — speech seemed strangely difficult to this woman who had saved her husband's life and secured her only child's future—"because Feltringham was drowned when I swam to land—or, rather, he died from a fractured skull, sustained as he dived in to swim after me. And I——"

At that moment she ceased speaking and collapsed on her husband's shoulder. Rosalind Atterbury, wife, mother—and heroine who had spoiled the spoiler—overcome with excitement and reaction, had fainted for the first time in her life!

YOU MUST NOT MISS

"Clustering Round Young Bingo,"

by P. G. WODEHOUSE,

NEXT MONTH.

What of the Living?

By

ALICE GRANT ROSMAN

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY DAVIS

NOBODY knew that Colonel Alistair Grant carried a secret home to England with him—that he went indeed to see justice done by one dead man to another. You would have said he was a pretty safe repository for secrets, with his grim face burned brown by Indian suns, his spare figure and ironic glance.

For years he had looked upon the world with a sardonic eye. There was plenty of reason, of course, but it did not add to his popularity. In the mess they called him Old Granite, but never to his face, for that would have savoured of an affection no one felt for him. If he knew this and was secretly moved by it either to anger or irony he gave no sign. They had conspired against him in all those subtle ways by which a group of men can make hell for one among them, and always in the forefront of the plot had been Tommy Landseer, with his V.C., his spectacular charm, his amazing popularity.

Yet when Tommy lay dying it was to the Colonel that he turned with his story, perhaps with the natural instinct of the weak to lean upon the strong, perhaps from some obscure feeling that by thus delivering himself into the hands of the enemy he expiated to some extent the crime for which he had allowed another man to suffer—a man who now lay sleeping in an obscure grave in France.

The Colonel had pledged himself to see justice done to this man's memory at last.

He might have told Tommy's disgraceful story to the mess that had loved him, but he did not take this exquisite revenge. He applied for leave long overdue, set sail, a strange messenger on a stranger errand, and knew that no one sighed to see him go.

It was late May when he came into England, and if it is true that harsh lands make a harsher people, it may be that the soft skies and flowery woods, the green loveliness of the little fields all stitched with primroses and hawthorn at the edges, worked their own purpose with this man who looked upon them for the first time in many painful years.

Colonel Grant was known for a just man, but not a merciful, yet who knew him, after all? At least he saw that he could not set out to right this wrong without first giving some warning to the people who would suffer—those whom Captain Tommy Landseer, V.C., had left behind.

It was a distasteful business, but he had undertaken it, and he would have to see it through. There was a young widow, and there would be tears and lamentations of course, entreaties, despair—fine legacies from a hero. He knew that he must resist them all.

He wrote a stiff and characteristic note to young Mrs. Landseer forthwith, saying that, as her late husband's commanding officer and one who had been with him at the last, he begged leave to call upon her.

THREE days later he was on his way to spend a night at her little home in Sussex, for while he would have infinitely preferred a briefer and more formal visit, the distance had made it difficult and inexpedient to refuse her cordial invitation.

He had never seen Hilary Landseer, for she had not accompanied Tommy to India two years before, remaining in England with their little son, who was at once too old for the tropics and too young for school. And therefore, when the train drew into Appledor station and she came to meet him, he realized just how peculiarly difficult and distasteful this business was going to be. For here was no fluffy young thing, wearing the panoplies of grief, but a slender creature in a grey knitted suit and little hat, who smiled a welcome out of the most steadfast eyes he had ever seen.

"It is wonderfully good of you to have come to us so soon," she said in a voice that seemed to him very fine and sweet, and then she led him to her waiting two-seater, and talked of the voyage and other

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impersonal things as she drove him home through lanes of beauty.

It was only when she was giving him tea in the flower-filled drawing-room, where photographs of Tommy Landseer, V.C., smiled upon the world from every corner, that she spoke of him at last.

"You know we're awfully proud of him," she said with a little misty smile, "and I am sure you are too. Everyone loved him."

A poser for Old Granite, that, and, cowardly for once, he evaded it.

"He was easily the most popular man in the mess," he said, and at her little glance of thanks hated more than ever the task before him—a sticky business.

The door opened and a little boy came in, his mother leading him proudly to the visitor.

"This is my son," she said, her hands on his shoulders. "Derek, darling, Colonel Grant was your daddy's commanding officer."

Derek! Colonel Alistair Grant was startled, for that was the name of the lad who lay in France.

The small boy saluted solemnly, and with an odd sense of relief the visitor noticed that he had his mother's eyes.

"Please, may I come into your regiment later on?" requested Derek.

"I shall certainly insist upon it," said the Colonel, gravely, an unaccustomed colour in his face.

"But I'm afraid I won't ever win a V.C.," continued Derek, in anxious apology lest this should be a fatal drawback, as he settled himself confidently near the visitor's chair. It was curious that from the first the stranger had no terror for the child.

"Many fine soldiers fail to do that, old man," said the Colonel, grimly.

"Daddy always told us so, Derek," his mother reminded him, and added to the Colonel, with her misty smile: "He said the regiment tossed up for it, and he won. He was always so lucky! But there never was a hero yet who would admit his bravery, was there?"

"Physical courage isn't a conscious state of mind, after all," said the Colonel, "and in our secret hearts I suppose we all know the extent of our own cowardice."

That, at least, trite as it might be, was a preparation for what he had to tell, but she read in it a different meaning.

"I know," she said, thoughtfully, "it isn't the deed that matters, but the idea behind it—the inspiration."

SHE sent the little boy away and brought a letter from her writing desk.

"They are putting up a tablet to his memory in the school chapel," she said, "and I wanted to show you the Head's letter, because he says so much better than I can what I mean. In fact, I think it was he who made me see it."

Colonel Grant took the letter perforce and went to the window to read it.

"*Dear Mrs. Landseer*" (wrote the Head), "*I am glad to tell you that we have decided to erect a memorial tablet in the school chapel to the memory of your gallant husband, whose untimely death is such a real loss to us and to his country. The old boys of his own day, and the lads of this who knew and loved him during his many visits to the school, will need no reminder of that merry-hearted sportsman and brave soldier, Landseer, V.C. But to future generations of boys this little tablet to commemorate one of the finest deeds of the Great War will be, I hope, an inspiration and ever-present reminder of those qualities of courage and love of country which it has always been the aim of the school to teach and which he has exemplified so gloriously.*

"*I will write of the unveiling as soon as the date is settled, and hope that you will do the school the honour of being present for the occasion.*

"*I am, dear Mrs. Landseer,*
"*Yours very faithfully,*
"P. DORMER."

"We're not going to mourn for him," Hilary said, as he folded the letter and gave it back, "for, after all, he died for his country, as it was his old wounds that were responsible. Did I tell you the doctor wrote to me? And we've had him all those years longer than so many women have had their men. I think we were very lucky."

Her voice shook a little, but she smiled.

"And now we have the inspiration."

"Er—quite," said Colonel Alistair Grant, who was shortly going to demolish that, and felt like an executioner.

"I hope you won't mind," Hilary went on, "but I have promised to take you to see a very old friend for half an hour before dinner. It is Lady Romilies."

"Romilies," echoed the Colonel—for Derek Romilies had been the real name of the man who lay buried in France—the man whom he had come to justify.

"Yes," Hilary hesitated, as though searching for words. "She is very sad because she lost her only son," she said. "Derek Romilies was Tommy's greatest friend."

"I know," said the Colonel, dryly.

Hilary flashed a quick look at him.

"Oh, I'm glad you know," she said, with relief. "Did Tommy tell you? But I suppose everyone *did* know. Colonel Grant, Derek Romilies was one of the dearest and

finest men I've ever known, and I never will believe he did that dreadful thing."

"Ah—you think he was shielding someone, perhaps," suggested Old Granite. At last here was an opportunity to prepare the way for what he had to tell.

"Or else he was the victim of circumstances. We always thought so," she said. "I said so to Tommy often, but, poor dear, he never could bear to talk of it. They were such friends. . . . It broke him up completely."

"I see. And you think Lady Romilies would not be distressed to see a stranger!"

"We don't think of you as a stranger," Hilary smiled at him, "and, you see, she's almost one of us. She's been like a mother to me, and Derek, my Derek, is her godson and adores her. She's had a very dreadful time, Colonel. People were pretty beastly, and she's awfully proud. She never goes out now—hardly sees anyone. If she seems queer and bitter, you will understand, I know."

"I shall understand," said the Colonel.

As he waited for her to get her hat he had an impulse to fly out of the place just as he was—out of this appalling situation in which he had become involved. The irony of it! This girl, wife of the man who had betrayed Derek Romilies, standing by Derek's mother while the rest of the world passed her by! And presently he was to spoil that fine gesture, for, of course, he could not run away. There was his promise there was justice to be done—to the memory of Derek Romilies.

They walked across the park together, he and Hilary, towards the manor house where a proud name had been dishonoured that he was soon to make clean again. An old place and melancholy it seemed to him, telling of a glory departed. The gardens were ordered, but few flowers blossomed there. Stillness was upon them, and upon the ancient house. Then they were in the drawing-room at last, and face to face with Lady Romilies, a tall, commanding figure with fierce eyes and an icy smile.

"So you were Tommy's commanding officer?" she asked him. "Then I hope you kept a firm hand upon the boy. He needed it."

"I believe I have the reputation of being a martinet of the very worst description," he informed her, gravely.

"Ha! I'm glad to hear it. There is too much gush and sentimentality about the world to-day, Colonel. We've grown soft. These are bad times."

"They always have been, Lady Romilies." The answer seemed to please the fierce old woman, and ignoring the matter of Tommy further she drew him into talk of India, where she had been stationed with her husband in the 'nineties, with a bitter tirade on politics, manners, and morals to spice the tale. Only once, when Hilary interposed to mention that Colonel Grant had been with Tommy when he died, she turned from a kind glance at the girl to a sharp one at her visitor.

"I'm glad of that!" she said, and instantly he sensed behind the commonplace phrase some hidden

"This is my son," she said. "Derek, darling, Colonel Grant was your daddy's commanding officer." The small boy saluted solemnly.

meaning, some challenge. What, he wondered, did she know, or what did she suspect?

"So you must go," she said, when presently they rose to leave her, "but Colonel Grant will spare an old woman half an hour in the morning? I have still much to ask you about India, and we needn't bore this child with our ancient reminiscences."

So he was to come alone!

"It will be a pleasure," said Colonel Alistair Grant, with sombre gallantry.

HOURS later he sat at his window in the darkness, looking out at a night of frosted stars and seeing only this intolerable task which was still undone.

He had come home to ease the conscience of one dead man and clear the name of another, but—

What of the living?

He thought of Hilary with her gallant courage, her belief in the idea that is behind all heroism, of the child already planning to go into his father's regiment; of the tablet on the school chapel to be an inspiration and ever-present reminder to future generations of those qualities of courage and love of country.

And he was to demolish all this? For what?

It was almost dawn before he slipped into a fitful sleep. Soon after breakfast, grey of face and with leaden feet, he walked across the park again to meet the challenge of Lady Romilies. What did she know? That, at all events, he must discover without delay.

She was waiting for him, in a brighter room this morning, the sunlight filling it with pale bars of gold. There were flowers, too, banked high under a portrait of a young man, and she took him to stand before it.

"I want to show you my son," she said.

"He has a fine face," said Colonel Grant, and meant it.

"He was a fine man," said his mother, and once more her keen old eyes raked and challenged the visitor.

"I know! Lady Romilies, I was with young Landseer when he died."

"Humph! And he was selfish to the end?"

"Selfish? He told me the truth."

"Exactly. He thought more of his own wretched conscience than of the people he left behind. Thoroughly characteristic," said Lady Romilies, tartly.

"On the contrary," said Old Granite, not understanding, "he exacted a promise from me that I would undo as far as possible the wrong he had done your son."

"And I must ask you to give me your word that you will not keep that promise."

"Good God!" said Colonel Grant.

Lady Romilies sat down as though suddenly she had grown very tired.

"Colonel Grant, my son loved Hilary," she told him, "but the child preferred the lesser man. Well—Derek had to put up with that. It was fate, and he was no weakling. But when this wretched scandal happened it was his love that stood the test. He was the last of his name—a rather great name in its day. He would never marry, but there was little Derek Landseer, there was Hilary, there was Tommy's V.C. that had brought glory to the regiment and to his people and his country. Was all that to be lost? When a combination of circumstances pointed the blame to Derek, he knew Tommy's weakness, and took it. It meant scandal and disgrace—he knew all that. He had to leave the regiment, but he changed his name and enlisted as a private. He died in the ranks in France."

"By Jove!" said the Colonel, deeply moved. "It was a great end. And you knew? You never moved to clear him?"

"He loved the child," said the old woman. "He gave up for her the greatest thing he had—his good name. Who am I to ask for it back?"

"Or I?" said Old Granite.

Next month will appear the first of a new series of stories—each complete in itself—by

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM.

The new series, which is entitled

"Mr. Billingham, the Marquis, and Madelon,"

is one of the most thrilling ever related by this prince of story-tellers.

"INSULTS" to SCOTLAND.

COLLECTED BY FENN SHERIE.

IT has been said that the best means of making a Scotsman happy in his old age is to tell him a joke when he is young. It might be added that the best means of making an Englishman happy at any age is to tell him a joke against the Scotsman.

The Scot himself is well aware of this fact, and usually accumulates a fund of anecdotal libels against his fellow-countrymen upon which to draw whenever he meets an Englishman. Possibly he has a theory that when a man is happy one can usually get more out of him.

It is always unwise to tell a Scotsman that he has no sense of humour. He will invariably retaliate by saying, "But why shouldn't I have a sense of humour? After all, it's a *gift*." Then, if you encourage him, he will proceed to reel off, in the form of a narrative, a string of anecdotes

Beachcomber (reading postscript to bottled message from the sea): "If I'm no picked up, tell my brither to collect the twa pence on this bottle at the 'Rob Roy Arms.'"

By permission of "The Humorist"

Sandy. 'Weel, boys, what'll we hae"—(on second thoughts) "rain or snow?"

By permission of "London Opinion."

appertaining to "carefulness," in this fashion:—

There was once an Aberdonian (the subject is usually an Aberdonian when the story is related by a Scot) who was travelling to London. After journeying for some hours in silence, an Englishman seated opposite to him in the railway carriage endeavoured to open a conversation.

"It's a long and weary journey, isn't it?" he remarked.

The Scot frowned.

MacPherson: "An' why dae ye tak' your whusky a' at wan mouthful?"

MacAndrew: "Eh, mon, I once had ma glass knocked over."

By permission of "London Opinion."

"So it ought to be for three pounds," he answered.

A little later the Englishman asked Jock if he could oblige him with a match. Reluctantly the latter took a box from his pocket and solemnly presented his companion with a match—one match. The Englishman, meanwhile, had been fumbling in his own pockets, and a look of disappointment now spread over his face.

"Dash it! Whatanuisance!" he said, miserably. "I'm afraid I've left my tobacco pouch behind."

"Aweel," answered the Scot, feeling in his own pocket and producing the box, "then you'll no' be needin' that match."

Later some other travellers entered the carriage, and the Scot was persuaded to join them in a game of cards. When the time came for settling up, he had won quite a nice little sum from the Englishman. The latter was able to pay over the money in notes, with the exception of an odd penny.

"I'm afraid I can't manage the penny," he said. "I have no loose change."

"Well, never mind," answered the Scot. "Give me your evening paper instead."

By this time they had arrived at an important junction, where an official opened the door and demanded to see their tickets. After all the other passengers had shown their tickets, Jock was still fumbling for his. Slowly and systematically he turned out every pocket, but without result. Just as the guard was blowing his whistle the ticket inspector suddenly noticed that the Scot was

Golfer: "What's the matter, Sandy? Aren't you going to play this afternoon?"

Sandy: "Man, hae you not heard? I've lost ma ball."

Reproduced by permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

absent-mindedly holding the missing ticket between his teeth. Looking rather shamefaced, Jock handed it over, and the official just had time to clip it before the train moved off.

"What a fool you must have felt!" said one of the passengers. "Fancy keeping him waiting all that time when you had the ticket in your mouth all the while!"

"But I was no' a fool," replied the Scot. "I was just suckin' the date off."

Upon arriving in London the Scot surprised the Englishman by inviting him to lunch, and he led the way into the restaurant of a West-end hotel. As soon as they were seated at the table he produced a packet of sandwiches from his pocket, called for two plates and two glasses of water, and then complained to the manager because the band was not playing.

Later he ordered a whisky for himself.

"Two shillings, please, sir," said the waiter.

THE STORM REACHES AUCHTERMUCHTY.

McPherson: "Pit yon candle oot, Mary. Ye shouldna waste guid lightning."

Reproduced by permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

"Two shillings! What a wicked price! Why, I can get better whisky than this for half the price at home."

"That may be, sir," replied the waiter. "But you must remember that this is a West-end hotel."

"What difference does that make?"

"Well, you see, we are obliged to charge higher prices to maintain the upkeep of the premises. You have to pay for the luxury of your surroundings. Those carpets, those decorations, even the beautiful pictures on the walls—all have to be paid for, you know."

Jock looked at the pictures indicated, heaved a sigh, and reluctantly put down his two shillings.

"I suppose you're right," he said.

On the following day he went to the same place and ordered another whisky, for which he offered the waiter a shilling.

"Two shillings, please, sir," said the waiter.

"Ah, no you don't," replied the Scot. "*I saw your pictures yesterday.*"

Jock next set out to find accommodation for the night, but it seemed that all the hotels were full.

"Never mind," said the Englishman. "Come home with me. I think I can accommodate you."

So Jock went home with his

THE ORIGIN OF THE SLOW MOTION PICTURE.

Two Scotsmen, after dining together at a restaurant, reaching for the bill.

By permission of "The Tatler."

Mackintosh (to his rescuer): "Weel, laddie, ye've saved me from drooning, an' ye'll no find me ungrateful—hae ye got change for a saxpence?"

By permission of "The Humorist."

new friend, was given an excellent dinner, plenty to drink, a comfortable bed, and, on the following day, breakfast and lunch. The time came for his departure.

"I hope everything has been to your satisfaction?" asked his host.

"Splendid. You've given me a grand time," was the reply.

"Well," said the Englishman, reluctant to broach the subject of payment, "what would you say to a pound?"

The Scot's eyes glittered.

"Mon," he said, "that would be a godsend!"

The Englishman then offered to see Jock off at the railway station. Before they parted they had a drink or two together, for which the Englishman paid. Presently Jock decided that the time had come for him to put his foot down.

"Now, look here," he said. "You've been very generous to me, accommodating me for the night and feeding me well, and now you've paid for several drinks." He dived into his pocket and pulled out half a crown. "I think it's only fair—we'll toss for this one."

And so the stream of stories goes on. Where they all originate nobody knows. One can only marvel at the cleverness of the anonymous humorists who are able to invent so many widely different variations on the same theme.

Some of the anecdotes are masterpieces of brevity.

Here, for instance, is the driest story ever told.

"An Englishman and a Scotsman went into a bar for a drink—and the Englishman had no money."

Even more brief, though perhaps a little old, is the following: "A Scot opened his purse—and a moth flew out."

Upon this the Scotsman has an amusing variation. "An Aberdonian opened

Sandy (who has won on a 50 to 1 chance): "D'ye mean t' say I've won a' this money juist for puttin' doon five shillings?"

Friend: "Yes, of course."

Sandy: "Ma conscience! Tell me, mon—how long has this sort of thing been goin' on?"

By permission of "The Humorist."

his purse—and his moth was dead."

The Hebrew is often associated with the Scot in anecdote. The story of the Scot and the Jew who obtained free drinks by a clever ruse may be new to some readers.

The Jew entered the bar first, ordered his drink, and engaged the barmaid in conversation. Having finished his drink, he was about to depart when the lady asked him for payment.

"Vy," said the Jew, indignantly, "I gave you the money when you handed me the drink."

The barmaid, being unable to remember exactly what had occurred, allowed him the benefit of the doubt.

On arriving outside he told the Scot how he had succeeded in bluffing the girl.

"Good," said Jock. "I must try that masel'."

So in he went, ordered his drink, and engaged the barmaid in conversation just as the Jew had done.

When the time came for him to depart he turned to the girl suddenly and said:—

"Hey, lassie, *what about my change?*"

Then there is the rather subtle story of the Scot and the Jew who were brought before a magistrate on a charge of drunkenness. Immediately they appeared in the dock, the magistrate looked round the court and inquired: "But where is the other man?"

"Put a saxpence in the Christmas pudding, have ye, ye daft old fule? Well, tak' care to mark the spot wi' a wee bit holly, and resairrve it till the guests have departed."

By permission of "The Humorist."

Perhaps the best story associating the two races, however, is the following—another example of highly concentrated humour: "A Scotsman owed a Jew half a crown. He paid him—and the Jew died of lead-poisoning."

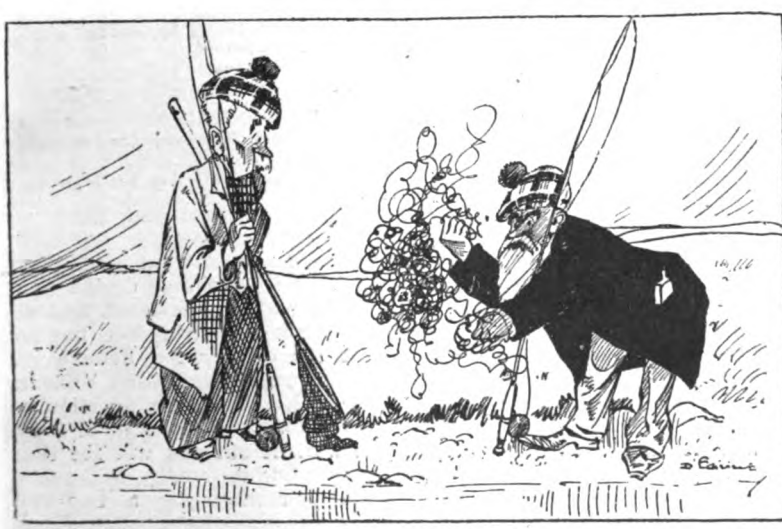
In conclusion, have you heard this?

By way of a joke an Englishman told a Scottish friend who was about to cross the Forth Bridge that it was considered unlucky to make the journey without throwing a penny into the water below. When Jock returned from his journey, he asked him whether he had thrown the penny in as suggested.

"Aye, I did," replied the Scot.

"You did?" exclaimed the astonished Englishman.

"Aye, I did. An' I nearly lost it—for I got the string in an awful tangle pulling it up again."



"Would it not be be'er to pu' on a new cast, Jock?"

"Hoots, mon, I've had it in worrse tangles than this and got it oot wi' a little patience."

By permission of "The Humorist."

A NEW LINE IN CROSS-WORDS

By

Barry Pain

THE other night Barker came to see me, bringing with him his little leather portfolio. He is not the Barker you know nor any relation to him. This Barker is an amiable, excitable, highly-inventive lunatic—as I have often told him.

"I'm glad to see you, Barker," I said, "but I'm sorry you took the trouble to bring that portfolio with you. If it contains any more documents relative to your idea of running an internal combustion engine on water instead of the more usual petrol, all I can say is that I don't want to see them."

"I knew you'd say that!" exclaimed Barker. "I never had any such idea, and you know it. What I did do last week was to demonstrate to you that the ordinary motor-engine was unmechanical and uneconomical. You had not sufficient education or intelligence to follow me, and I sha'n't return to the subject. What I have here to-night," he continued, tapping his portfolio proudly, "is something that will appeal to anybody who is interested in cross-word puzzles—that is to say, everybody in the empire."

"You can leave me out. A soft answer may turn away wrath, but as far as I'm concerned cross-words stir up anger."

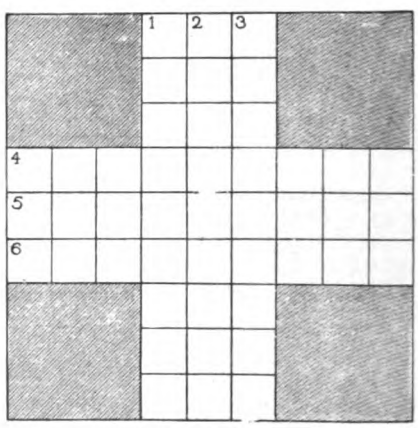
"Why?"

"I've tried some. They've got a design like a pattern for an early Victorian counterpane. I have a simple mind and lead a simple life. These things are too complicated for me."

"Good!" said Barker, smiling, and diving into his portfolio. "I thought you would make that mistake. The more complicated the puzzle looks the easier it really is—and *vice versa*. I will prove it. Just cast your eye over that."

He drew out a sheet and handed it to me. Here it is:—

No. 1.—THE CROSS CROSS-WORD PUZZLE.



CLUES.

VERTICAL.

(1) Something for the pocket (a hyphenated word with the hyphen omitted).
(2) Somebody for a dirty street.
(3) Sometimes on an envelope.

HORIZONTAL.

(4) The modern substitute for poetry (two words).
(5) An animal used for rid'ng.
(6) The people of a nationality that has been unpopular.

"Now," said Barker, "what could look simpler than that? A simple design of a cross. Only six words to find out and all of them nine letters in length. Yet, but for the fact that the clues are a little overgenerous, that would be a rather difficult puzzle. Why? Because the proportion of two-way letters to space to be filled is so low. If you work it out you will see that the proportion is one to five."

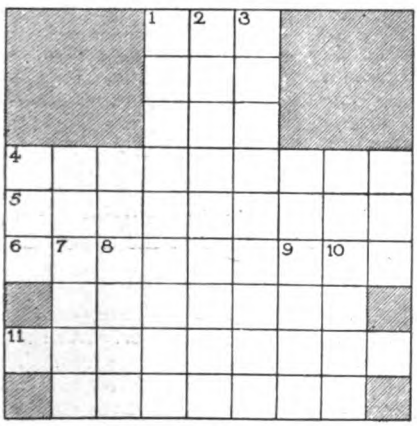
"What do you mean by a two-way letter?"

"One which, without change of position, is used both vertically and horizontally. I should have thought that obvious. I will

now show you the same puzzle with a few additions made to it."

Here is Barker's second exhibit :—

THE SAME SIMPLIFIED.



ADDITIONAL CLUES.

VERTICAL.

(7) Found in an organ and by a river.
(8) Found in a ship and enjoyed by pigs.
(9) Found in a hospital and mentioned in the Bible.
(10) As we were born.

HORIZONTAL.

(11) Discontinuance of use.

"You would probably think that the puzzle is now more complicated. It may look like that, but it is really simplified. We now have fourteen more spaces to fill, but we have eleven more two-way letters. The proportion improves to a shade better than one in three. A child could solve it now."

"Well," I said, "I wish you wouldn't talk sums. And don't you think the public is getting fed up? Besides, oughtn't every letter in the open squares to be a two-way letter?"

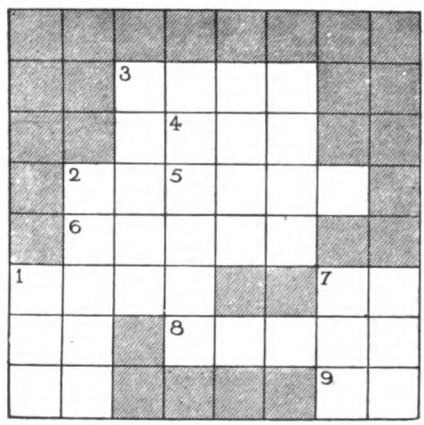
"That may be so for purposes of competitions. I know nothing about competitions. The two designs I have shown you are merely to illustrate the fact that the greater the number of two-way letters, the easier the puzzle becomes. As regards your other point I agree with you. We are ready now for a new line. And I have found it. My first idea was beautiful, but not practical."

"Like all your other ideas. Tell me about it."

"Well, it occurred to me that the man who set the puzzles was having much too easy a time. He makes a set pattern, arranging it so as to have no two-letter words, or as few as possible, and then he can fill it in from any blessed words in the dictionary. What I thought was that one might have a definite set of words for each puzzle, permitting no other to be used—that you might take some well-known quotation, make your cross-word puzzle out of that, and afterwards reassemble the words in their order. This is so enormously difficult that I had to make a concession. I gave up symmetry of design and balance of vertical and horizontal. As long as two words crossed in one place, that was sufficient. Even so I slipped up. It is a pity, because if you take the words in my puzzle and arrange them in their right order, not only do they make a quotation from a very well-known poem, but the quotation gives the real reason why people do puzzles. Just look over this and see if you can spot my blunders."

Here is Barker's third exhibit :—

THE QUOTATION PUZZLE.



CLUES.

VERTICAL.

(1) First three letters of a word.
(2) Chief part of the same word.
(3) The very devil.
(4) Discovers.

HORIZONTAL.

(3) Term of admiration in U.S.A.
(4) Word of three letters—one more would make it four.
(5) Lazy.
(6) You should have two of these.
(7) Sign of the infinitive.
(8) Might mean quiet, but does not.
(9) Might mean the same if it were an abbreviation, but is not.

"Now," said Barker, "I'm not showing this as a success but as a failure. You can probably see where it is wrong."

"It looks," I said, "like the ground plan of an early Roman washhouse recently

excavated at Ephesus, or Wimbledon, or some such wild place."

"I do wish you'd be serious about this."

"Very well. Then your first two clues are no clues at all. You say that the first is three letters of a word, and that the second is the rest of it."

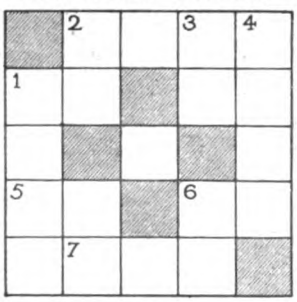
"Oh, no, I don't."

"It comes to that. At any rate, you offer no clue whatever as to what the word is."

"I expected you'd say that. To anybody who is used to acrostics those two clues simply shout the word at you. No, where the thing is really wrong is that two of the words are not crossed at all. However, that doesn't matter. I gave up that idea. I do not believe there is any genius in this country who can make an absolutely legitimate cross-word puzzle out of a given quotation. Quotations contain too many two-letter words, and very often they are repeated. My really great idea was something quite different. Put briefly, it is the substitution of cross-numbers for cross-words. I have prepared quite a simple specimen that anybody with the usual reference books could solve in two minutes. However, here it is, just to give you an idea of the thing."

He handed me the fourth exhibit.

THE LIGHT PUZZLE.



CLUES.

CENTRAL.

Your own number on your own list.

VERTICAL.

(1) The year of the accession of Henry VII.
(2) The number of sixpences that weigh an ounce.
(3) The age at which Pitt became for the second time First Lord of the Treasury.
(4) The year of the execution of Charles I

HORIZONTAL.

(2) The year in which Missouri was accepted as a State of U.S.A.
(5) Tennyson's age at death.
(6) Shelley's age on his first marriage.
(7) The batsman's hope.

"Now, then," said Barker, "have you any faults to find with this?"

"Two. You call it the 'Light Puzzle,' and it has nothing whatever to do with the light; and also your last horizontal is not crossed anywhere."

"I knew you'd say that. I'm glad. I can answer both your questions together. It is called the 'Light Puzzle' because it, after the numbers are all filled in, you add it up, taking no notice of the black squares, of course, you will find that the result gives you the velocity of light in miles per second."

"That sounds rather ingenious."

"Any child could do it. Also, the last horizontal is, as you say, not crossed. But it is perhaps some slight defence that it is used vertically in the addition. Just see what some advantages of the cross-number puzzle are. The man who devises a cross-word puzzle is in the position of a person who is trying to dance a prescribed step on a slack wire with his legs tied together. We see the result in the clues which he gives. They are always dull, utterly wanting in point, humour, vim, zip, or pep, and they are very frequently unfair. The poor man does not wish to be unfair, but with the conditions under which he is working he cannot help himself. The other day I saw a case where the puzzle-setter was confronted with a two-letter word of two consonants and gave as his clue: 'Chemical formula.' Now I really do not know how many million chemical formulæ there are, but I do know that he might just as well have said: 'Initials of a person living in Europe.' Briefly, his clue is no clue at all. Now there is no trouble with the two-figure number, or even with the one-figure number. You can make a limitless number of clues to either of them. If you like, every clue can be an arithmetical question to which the figure or figures is the answer. You can bring far more of the acrostic spirit into the thing. You can make it more amusing, more pointed, more satisfactory. What do you think yourself?"

"Well, if a man with a logical and methodical mind—which you have not got—took up the idea, I think it is just possible that he might make something of it."

Barker looked so pleased that I was almost ashamed of myself.

"Really?" he said, delightedly. "I think that is the very first compliment you have ever paid me."

"Oh," I said, "my enthusiasm is always carrying me away." I glanced towards the table. "Suppose," I said, "we change the subject."

"Thanks very much," said Barker. 'You'll remember that I take plain water in mine. Not soda."

(The solutions will be given next month.)

w Story by ARNOLD BENNETT

APR 7 1925

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THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

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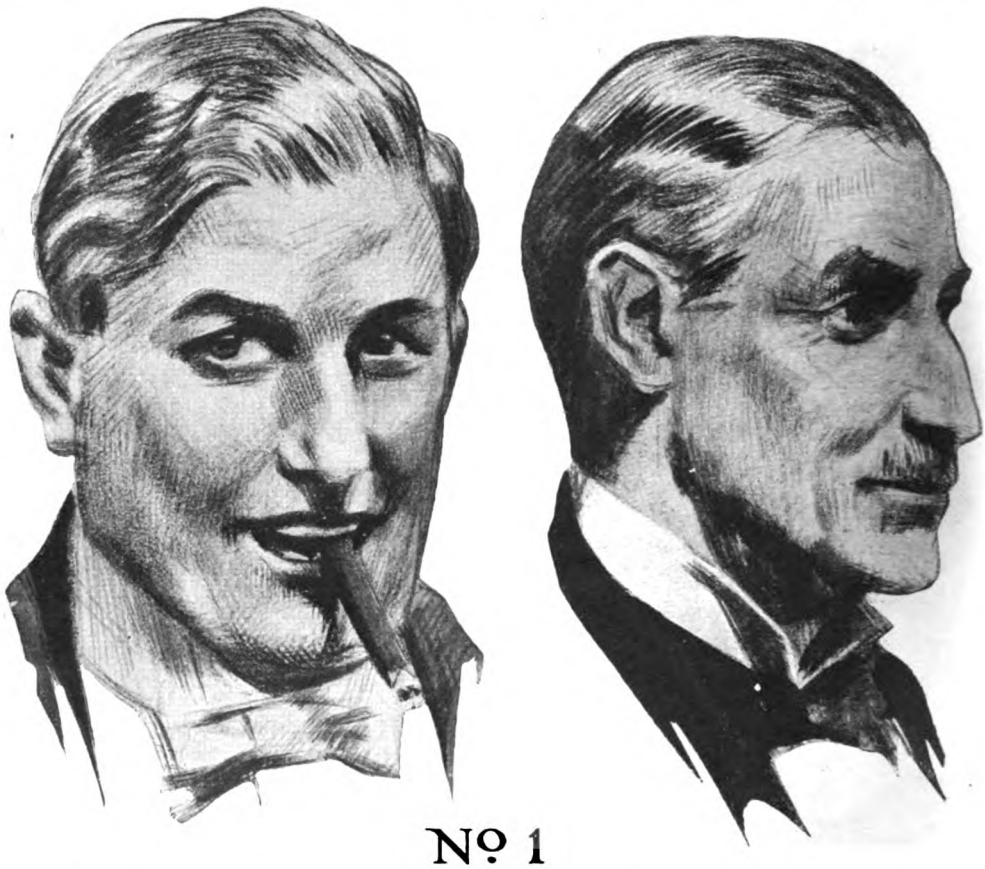
APRIL, 1925.

MR BILLINGHAM, THE MARQUIS



No 1

The Bamboozling of Mr. Gascoigne

MR. SAMUEL T. BILLINGHAM, of New York, recently landed from the great liner anchored a few miles out, walked along the Terrace at Monte Carlo, serene, light-hearted, beatifically content. His yellow shoes and his variegated socks might be described as a trifle vivid, but the rest of his attire—his well-pressed grey suit, his irreproachable linen, and his well-shaped grey Homburg hat—was beyond criticism. He was a man of medium height, thick-set, inclined a little, perhaps, to *embonpoint*. His complexion was pink, his flaxen hair only slightly streaked with grey, his eyes filled with the light of good-humour. He was possibly about forty-five years of age, but he walked with the spring of a young man. In his pocket were his *carte de saison* for the Cercle Privé and card of membership

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AND MADELON

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBEY

of the Sporting Club, taken out an hour or so before. In the same pocket was also a well-filled money case, and in his mind the consciousness of pleasant quarters in his favourite hotel, and the knowledge that he was in the spot which he loved more than any place on earth. Furthermore, he was pleasantly aware of the fact that he was in the immediate neighbourhood of various interesting little rendezvous where restrictions as to any refreshment he might deem advisable for his welfare were non-existent; where compatriots were always to be found and amusement plentiful. Mr. Samuel T. Billingham, brimming over with good-humour, was certainly an agreeable circumstance in a wonderful setting.

At half-past eleven o'clock—Mr. Billingham was a man of regular habits—he quitted the promenade, crossed the Place in front of the Casino, and selected a table outside the Café de Paris. He selected it simply because it happened to be the nearest empty one, and without even a glance at his neighbours. It was nevertheless, without a doubt, by the direction of that mysterious influence called fate that he should have chosen that particular chair and ordered his champagne cocktail with that clear and pleasant directness of speech which caused the two people at the adjacent table to turn and focus their attention upon him.

"A champagne cocktail," he enjoined confidently, frankly ignoring the fact that he was addressing a foreigner, "and some of them little salted nuts—and, say, get a move on!"

The waiter hurried off. Mr. Samuel T. Billingham looked around him genially and met the faintly amused, gently inquiring gaze of his neighbours. Mr. Billingham smiled back again, but at that moment no words were exchanged.

The man and the girl were of ingratiating, even distinguished, appearance. The former seemed to be about fifty or perhaps fifty-five years of age. He was tall and thin, dressed in dark clothes from which the first freshness had gone, and though no fault could have been found with his linen or the less important appurtenances of his toilet, it was noticeable that his shirt cuffs were a little frayed, his patent boots a little cracked, his coat a little shiny at the seams. His face was gaunt, his eyes were deep-set, but his mouth had a most attractive and humorous outline. The girl with whom he was seated was young enough to be his daughter, but bore him no resemblance. Her hair was of a most attractive shade of brown, and her eyes were of the very darkest shade of blue. She seemed pale from the absence of all cosmetics, but her lack of colour was, as a matter of fact, healthy and natural. There was something a little insolent about her expression, as though she were one of those often at war with the world and circumstances, but amongst the cosmopolitan little crowd by which they were surrounded she preserved an air of distinction which a keen student of his fellow-creatures, such as Mr. Billingham, was not slow to recognize.

Meanwhile the man and the girl talked—

the former in broken English—and, although they never seemed to raise their voices, every word they said was audible to their neighbour.

"It is incredible, Madelon," her companion exclaimed, irritably, "that you should have been so careless! Our day is spoilt."

"I am very sorry," she replied, humbly. "It is not often I forget such things. As you told me, I put three mille notes in my little sacque early this morning. Then, alas, the sun came out, I wore a different dress, and I brought the other sacque. There it is upon my dressing-table!"

"And here are we," the man grumbled, "without a penny to pay for our *consommation*, to say nothing of luncheon. Furthermore, there are the Rooms, and perhaps a fortune waiting. Last night I dreamed of fourteen three-times following."

"It is not so wonderful," she declared, a little pettishly. "You always dream of fourteen, but it never arrives."

THE champagne cocktail was brought to Mr. Billingham, who accepted it with an air of content. The eyes of the man and the girl rested for a moment upon the glass with a veiled expression of envy. Mr. Billingham lifted his hat and leaned forward.

"Sir," he said, addressing the man, "I am blessed—or should I say cursed?—with acute hearing. From what you were saying to the young lady I gather that you have left your money at home."

His neighbour, also with his hat slightly uplifted, listened with an air of grave embarrassment.

"Sir," he rejoined, "I regret that, in some temporary excitement, owing to the discovery of my niece's carelessness, my voice was a little raised. May I venture to suggest, however, that my conversation was not intended to reach the ear of a stranger, nor can I—pardon me—understand what significance it can have for him."

"That's very well put," Mr. Billingham commented approvingly. "I'm rather a plain-spoken man myself, but what I figured out in my own mind was that, this being my first morning in Monte Carlo after an absence of a good many years, and this being my favourite spot upon the earth, and the sun shining and my cocktail looking pretty good, I thought perhaps I might take the liberty of inviting you and the young lady to join me."

The elderly gentleman rose to his feet, hat in hand, and bowed.

"Sir," he said, "we shall accept your courtesy in—may I say?—a spirit of reciprocity. Permit me to present my niece, Mademoiselle Madelon de Félan. I myself am known as the Marquis de Félan."

Mr. Billingham rose also, lifted his hat, fumbled in his pocket, and produced a card.

"Samuel T. Billingham is my name, sir," he announced. "I come from New York and I'm interested in linoleum—that is to say, I was, only I've recently sold out. Pleased to meet you both. *Garçon!*"

Their prospective host accepted an invitation to bring his chair to the table of his new acquaintances, and the succeeding half an hour passed agreeably enough. Certain orders concerning champagne cocktails were given and repeated whilst the usual amenities of general conversation were exchanged.

"I was thinking of moving on to Ciro's presently," Mr. Billingham announced, glancing at his watch. "We might try one there, and, say, why shouldn't you and the young lady join me in a bite of luncheon?"

The girl laughed at him pleasantly—and it was a very pleasant laugh indeed.

"I'm so hungry!" she murmured.

The Marquis was touched.

"Really, sir," he said, "your kindness is astounding. We will join you on the distinct understanding that we are allowed within the course of the next few days to reciprocate your hospitality."

"Good enough!" Mr. Billingham assented. "That goes, then. We'll move on as soon as the *garçon* has brought me my change. Now promise you won't go back on our luncheon engagement, whatever happens."

"Not a chance," the girl assured him, with that twinkle in her eyes which Mr. Billingham was already beginning to love. "I'm far too hungry, and Ciro's is my favourite restaurant."

"Very well, then," Mr. Billingham concluded, drawing his chair up a little closer. "So long as it's understood that you don't take offence, I just want to ask you one thing. Do I look such an almighty hayseed that you should pick me out to try that old wheeze on?"

There was a moment's silence. The orchestra rattled on, corks still popped, a pleasant murmur of conversation swelled and flowed around. The man and the girl, however, remained speechless. The latter had lost that smile of pleasant anticipation; her face was suddenly a little drawn and troubled. The man seemed older. His manner, however, preserved its dignity.

"Sir——" he began.

"Cut it out," Mr. Billingham begged. "I know pretty well what I look like, but you see it's my job to look like it. Anyone would think I was what I want them to think me—an American traveller, over here, probably for the first time in his life, with plenty of the stuff. Well, I ain't! I'm

from the United States all right, but I'm looking after a little bit of that stuff myself. Perhaps that's why I sized you two up so easily."

admit that—but I'm not a bad sort, and I've taken a fancy to you two. We're going on to Ciro's and we're going to have that little lunch together. I can pay for it all right,

Mr. Billingham lifted his hat. "Sir," he said, "I am blessed—or should I say cursed?—with acute hearing. From what you were saying to the young lady I gather that you have left your money at home."

The Marquis half rose to his feet. Mr. Billingham pulled him back into his chair.

"Look here," he insisted, genially, "cut out the starch. I'm a bit of a crook—I'll

and dinner afterwards, most likely. No reason why we shouldn't have a pleasant day together. We might even get to talking business."

The Marquis coughed. He was beginning to recover himself.

"We will certainly accompany you to Ciro's—er—Mr. Billingham," he assented. "In the meantime, tell me, I beg of you, why you arrived at the conclusion that my niece and I were—er——"

"I figured it out this way," Mr. Billingham interrupted. "You are both French. What did you want to talk in English for, except that you wanted me to understand? That was enough for me to be going on with!"

"Our story is a sad one," the Marquis commenced.

"Say, we'll have that after luncheon," Mr. Billingham suggested, rising to his feet.

THE cocktails at Ciro's were equal to Mr. Billingham's anticipations, and the luncheon which he presently ordered was entirely satisfactory. Conversation, so far as his two guests were concerned, was a little stilted and diffident. Their host, however, was absolutely at his ease.

"I guess you wouldn't believe it, you two," he recounted, as they attacked a wonderful selection of *hors d'œuvres*, "but I was once a rich man, and I never got such fun out of life in those days as I am helping myself to now. I figure it out like this. When you've got your money in the bank, and the bits coming in, you're kind of tied up with respectability. Now, since I was a lad I've always been for adventures, and there's only one sort of adventure that counts, and that is the adventure which sets your brain against another man's and brings you in the stuff if you come out on top. It don't seem to me that a rich man has got any fighting outlook on life. Do you get me, Miss de Félan?"

"I understand what you mean," she replied, a little dubiously, "but I am afraid I do not agree with you. You see, I have always been poor, and I hate poverty."

"Might be kind of different for a young woman," Mr. Billingham conceded, thoughtfully, "but for a man, to go about the world doing no one any particular harm but living by his wits and what he can make by being a trifle smarter than other people, that's my idea of a happy time. I don't mind telling you that my present job over here is to swindle a man out of half a million dollars."

"Half a million dollars!" the Marquis gasped. "It is incredible!"

"What an imagination!" the girl sighed. "What courage!"

"I guess I'm not out for pinching old ladies' reticules," their host confided. "I like a big deal. And," he went on, leaning a little across the table, "if I can make up my mind that you two are to be trusted—I'm not saying I mightn't let you in on this little affair. I need just the sort of help you might be able to give, and that's a fact."

The Marquis concealed his impatience with all the restraint which was doubtless an inheritance of his breeding. The girl, however, was frankly eager.

"Tell us about it, Mr. Billingham," she begged. "We are so very poor, and I am tired of being poor."

"My niece has the natural desire of the young for luxuries," the Marquis observed, apologetically. "Frankly, I have outlived the necessity for wealth. My modest *déjeuner* here or at the Hôtel de Paris, my dinner, my bottle of Burgundy, my choice of brandies, *carte blanche* at my tailor's, a mille or two to play with when the fancy seizes me, are all I wish for."

"You don't aim at putting together a pile for later on in life?" Mr. Billingham queried.

"That is beyond my hopes," he admitted.

"And you, mademoiselle?"

The girl was terribly in earnest.

"If I had the chance," she said, "I would save. I love all the things which go to making life here so delightful, but more than anything else on earth I should love my independence. I should love to feel that it was no longer necessary for me to worry to-morrow as to how I was going to pay the next day's bills."

"Good spirit!" Mr. Billingham approved. "Good spirit, that!"

"Madelon is more practical than I," the Marquis sighed. "And now concerning that little affair of business, Mr. Billingham, you were about to place before us."

Mr. Billingham's attention, however, had wandered. He was watching the approach of an obvious compatriot—a man the very antithesis of himself, but with equally distinct transatlantic attributes; a small man with a sallow face and little hair, teeth stopped plentifully with gold, a wizened expression about the mouth, a short-sighted squint, neat clothes, and square-toed shoes. Mr. Billingham welcomed him as a long-lost brother.

"Say, if this isn't Joe Gascoigne!" he exclaimed. "Well, well, when did you come along?"

Mr. Gascoigne's reciprocating smile was frosty. His manner showed him to be a man of reserves.

"Paris, last night," he answered. "How's oil?"

Mr. Billingham shook his head gloomily.

"Can't say those new lands are panning out quite as we expected," he admitted.

"No gushers?" Mr. Gascoigne inquired.

"Nothing of that sort reported up to the present," was the cautious but some-

what depressed reply. "Still, one never knows. Where there's oil there's hope! Where are you staying?"

"Hôtel de Paris."

"Fine!" Mr. Billingham commented. "Sold your option yet, Joe?"

"I guess I didn't come to Monte Carlo to talk business," the other rejoined, as he turned to pass on his way down the room.

Mr. Billingham was thoughtful for a moment or two after his friend's departure. The fact, however, did not impair his appetite.

"Why did you not present your friend?" the girl inquired. "I thought Americans always introduced everybody."

Mr. Billingham smiled.

"That," he explained, "is the man whom we are going to rob. In case you come into the game I didn't ask you to shake hands with him. He's as near-sighted as a clam, and too vain to wear spectacles."

"He is presumably wealthy," the Marquis ventured.

"He is of the genus known as 'millionaires,'" Mr. Billingham acquiesced.

"To rob the rich," the Marquis murmured, "is a reasonable hobby."

"When you add to that," Mr. Billingham continued, "that Joe Gascoigne is the doggonest, meanest cuss that ever drank water and preached prohibition, you've got him sized up about right."

"To rob such a man," the Marquis suggested hopefully—"or shall I say to assist in the redistribution of his wealth?—would seem to be a charity. Five hundred thousand dollars, I think you said, sir?"

"Maybe more," Mr. Billingham assented. "It's like enough I'll take you two in, but we'll quit it now until later on. I've got to size you up a bit more first. Some salmon, this!" he added, almost reverently, as he laid down his fork. "The sauce tastes good to me, too!"

"Loire salmon," the Marquis confided. "Very good fish, but short season."

"Supposing you get on with that sad story of yours, Marquis," Mr. Billingham proposed, as they waited for the next course. "I don't say as I'm going to believe every word of it, mind you, but I'd like to hear your own account of yourself and the young lady."

THE MARQUIS was a little stiff at first, but he gradually warmed to his task. He came, it appeared, of a noble but impoverished family, and his various attempts at earning an honest living had met with a singular lack of success. He had been, in turn, a vineyard proprietor, a vender of wines, an insurance agent, and had interested himself in a cigarette business. In all of these undertakings he had suffered from lack of capital. A year ago the daughter of his only brother, who had married an Englishwoman, was left with practically no one else to look after her. They had lived in Paris for some short time upon the very trifling sum of money which she had brought with her. A small investment in a lottery business had been a failure. Behold them at Monte Carlo, practically destitute! It was becoming indeed a question of money sufficient for a meal between them. Mademoiselle Madelon was ready to give French lessons and she had some knowledge of typing. The Marquis had even gone so far as to offer himself as a sort of super-guide to strangers of wealth to whom the best restaurants and manifold pleasures of the place were unknown.

"Ever any trouble with the police?" Mr. Billingham asked.

"Not in these parts," the Marquis hastened to explain. There had been some slight misunderstanding in Paris, he added, with reference to his mismanagement of a gambling club, and the investigation into his lottery business had made a hurried departure from the city advisable. Here, however, they had a clean sheet; had modest rooms at an unpretentious hotel, and so far had paid their way.

"I sized you both up as being amateurs in this crook business," Mr. Billingham observed. "You may make good at it, of course, but I am not so sure about the young lady—kind of dangerous, with her appearance!"

"Sir," the Marquis replied, "I am a man of honour, but frankly I think that my niece should make more use of her undoubted attractions. She receives many invitations to lunch or dine with acquaintances, all of which she refuses. I think that she is wrong."

"My uncle thinks always," Madelon explained, "of some millionaire or nobleman who will invite me to lunch and find me so charming that he will propose marriage to me. Our acquaintances, unfortunately, are of the bar or the Casino, and I do not fancy that they are quite of the class likely to propose marriage to an honest but impecunious young woman."

"One never knows," the Marquis grumbled. "This is the land of chance, and in case of trouble you have always me to protect you."

Madelon preserved a tactful silence, and the luncheon drew on to its close. After he had paid the bill Mr. Billingham produced five hundred-franc notes.

"What about dining with me to-night?" he inquired.

"Two good meals in one day!" the girl exclaimed, blissfully.

"We shall be charmed," the Marquis assented, with a courteous wave of the hand.

"I have only one evening dress," the girl observed, thoughtfully.

"One will be all you need," was her prospective host's cheerful rejoinder. "I'll get a corner table in the Sporting Club. And if I can see my way to letting you in on this little job of mine, I'll tell you about it. In the meantime, if five hundred francs——"

"As a loan, my dear sir—a loan!" the Marquis interrupted, stretching out his hand eagerly.

"Precisely," Mr. Billingham agreed. "Three for you, sir, and two for the young lady."

The Marquis clutched his three without hesitation; Madelon made no movement.

"I do not think that we ought to take this money until we are sure that there is something we can do to earn it," she said.

"It is for—how you say it?—a lien upon our services," her uncle declared, thrusting the notes deep down into his pocket. "We are now at Mr. Billingham's commands. You look at the affair in that light, I am sure, my dear sir."

Mr. Billingham lit a cigar and smiled.

"I guess that's the idea, sir," he acquiesced. "Don't let me keep you. I see you are kind of fidgety to be off."

The Marquis rose to his feet; Madelon laid her hand upon his arm.

"Not to the Rooms just yet," she begged.

"My dear," he replied, tolerantly, "have no fear. I shall play carefully; start with the little white pieces, force my luck as I win. Later on I will show you something!"

"Meanwhile," Mr. Billingham reminded them, as he took leave of his guests, "at eight-thirty at the Sporting Club."

PERHAPS because of the smallness of the room and the absence of any orchestral music, the babel of conversation at the Sporting Club was that night almost deafening. Under its cover Mr. Billingham took his two guests into his confidence.

"It ain't worth while," he began, leaning forward so that the three heads nearly touched, "to try and put you wise to all the details, but, as a business proposition, this is how the matter stands. That swab of a fellow, Joseph Gascoigne, whom you saw at luncheon time, has got an option on ten thousand shares in an oil tract out in Arkansas—the 'Great Divide,' they call it. He lent 'em some money for a new plant a year ago, and insisted on the option in return. The option's up on Saturday. Last month they struck oil in eleven different places. Luckily the boss of the company was down there, and he had all work stopped at once. It's a big find, though, and if Joe Gascoigne gets to hear of it and exercises the option, it means that he'll buy ten thousand shares at a hundred dollars that are certainly worth a thousand dollars, and maybe worth twice as much."

"What happens to the shares if Mr. Gascoigne does not exercise his option?" the girl asked.

Mr. Billingham looked at her with a smile of admiration.

"A cute question," he admitted. "Those shares are divided equally amongst the five directors—or rather, they are allowed to buy them at a low price. Now, I'm well in with the boss of this company, and he knows I don't mind a bit of crooked work occasionally. If I, or we, can stop Joe Gascoigne cabling to America before Saturday and taking up his option, there's fifteen thousand dollars coming to me."

"Fifteen thousand dollars!" the girl murmured.

"An affair of two hundred thousand francs!" gasped the Marquis.

"What makes me look for a trifle of help in the matter," Mr. Billingham continued, "is that Joe is kind of wise to my being in with the crowd, and if he sees too much of me he'll be suspicious."

"You have some sort of a plan?" Madelon demanded, abruptly.

"I'd like his code," Mr. Billingham confided. "It's the simplest affair—two typewritten pages inside blue cardboard covers with just paper fasteners through. There ain't more than twenty or thirty sentences there, and the only other man who has a copy is his partner in New York. I know he means to sit tight until the last moment, and I know he's moving heaven and earth to discover whether there's any truth in the rumours of a gush, or whether it's a rig to make him buy the shares. He's getting cables most days, and he won't send his off until Friday. I had a man on the boat," Mr. Billingham went on, reflectively, "who could have had the code in a minute, but Joe was too artful for him. He handed it over to the purser with his valuables directly he boarded the steamer. In Paris he changed his hotel, so we didn't get a show there. That didn't worry me any, though, for I knew he was coming here. He's in room number two hundred and forty-six, Hôtel de Paris, and he uses the code-book every day. What I want is to get hold of the book for an hour without his knowing and then replace it."

"You don't want the book destroyed, then?" Madelon inquired.

"Not on your life," was the prompt response. "Joe would tumble to it right

away that there was something doing, and he'd cable out directly for the shares."

"It is a deeficult matter," the Marquis mused.

The girl said nothing. She was looking down at her plate with a thoughtful smile upon her lips. Mr. Billingham watched her.

"You have an idea, mademoiselle?" he ventured.

"This morning," she confided, "I went to a bureau here to try to find a post as lady's companion or secretary. There was nothing of the sort to be had. The only vacancies were for chambermaids at the Hôtel de Paris."

The Marquis burst into excited and fluent French. Madelon stopped him with a superb little gesture.

"You have perhaps made a fortune this afternoon with the money lent you by monsieur?" she demanded.

Her uncle's excitement subsided.

"I chose the wrong tables," he confessed. "My numbers were everywhere, all around me, save at the table where I played."

"That means," the girl pointed out, "that you have lost everything. We have no money, we cannot pay monsieur what he has advanced us. I find that situation more humiliating than to figure as a chambermaid for a week at the Hôtel de Paris."

"It's an idea," Mr. Billingham admitted, "but the hotel is a big place. How do you know, supposing they take you on, that you will be anywhere near Joe Gascoigne's rooms?"

"I have spoken several times to the housekeeper," Madelon explained. "I may be able to arrange it. It seems to me worth trying. I can think of nothing else."

"To-day is Monday," Mr. Billingham reflected. "We have until Friday at least. Joe has promised to cable on Friday. He'll wait until then for the latest information. What I'd like to see you do, mademoiselle, is to go back to your rooms, change that very becoming frock, put on your old clothes, and try and land the job at the Hôtel de Paris. There's no sense in wasting time."

"Supposing I get the book, what do I do with it?" Madelon inquired.

"You will bring it right to me in room number one hundred and fourteen of the same hotel," Mr. Billingham replied. "You will let me have it for about half an hour. Then you'll fetch it away again and try to leave it where you found it."

The Marquis sighed.

"I much regret the fact," he said, "that my niece is subjecting herself to indignity and perhaps trouble in this affair. I wish very much that it were possible for me to take a more active share in the business."

"You may do your bit yet," Mr. Billingham promised him, dryly. "Now, say, how much have you left of that five hundred francs?"

"Not a centime," was the dismal reply. "My niece, however——"

"I have a hundred francs," the young lady interrupted, "and I am sorry, uncle, but I mean to keep it. I cannot go to this place penniless."

"Of course not," Mr. Billingham agreed, drawing out his pocket-book and extracting from it a five-hundred-franc note. "You can have that for your evening's amusement, Marquis, on account of what may be coming to you when we succeed. When you have lost that, however, nothing doing. Remember that."

The Marquis's smile was one of superb confidence. The note was already buttoned up in his pocket.

"I shall win!" he declared.

MR. JOSEPH GASCOIGNE, although not in the strict sense of the word a susceptibie man, was not wholly insensible to feminine attractions. Seated at his desk with a pile of cable forms before him and an open manuscript code-book on his left-hand side, he heard the soft ingress of his very attractive-looking chambermaid into the bathroom. He laid down his pen and listened. It was she beyond a doubt. It was an occasion to progress a little in the flirtation which he had already essayed. He crossed the room.

"Hullo! Late this morning, aren't you?" he remarked, looking into the bathroom.

Madelon glanced at him from behind a barricade of towels.

"There is so much to do," she complained. "One fatigues oneself here terribly."

Mr. Gascoigne smiled palely. It was an opening.

"The work is too hard for you," he declared. "How would you like to leave it and let me find you something easier?"

"Ah, monsieur!" she sighed.

He advanced a little nearer.

"I've had my eye on you all this week," he confided. "You're too good for this job. Give 'em notice. Leave right away. Say where you live and I'll come round this afternoon, and I bet you we fix up something a good deal better than this."

Madelon was half distressed, half overcome by some sort of emotion. Mr. Gascoigne smiled and drew out his pocket-book.

"Say, do you know what this is?" he asked. "Guess you don't come across many of them. It's a mille note! Put it in your pocket, drop those towels, give me a kiss,

and go and tell the housekeeper you've found a better job."

Madelon gazed at the mille note ecstatically.

"But monsieur is generous!" she exclaimed.

Monsieur's telephone-bell rang. He turned away with annoyance.

"Wait one second," he begged. "I'll be right back. . . . Well, what's the matter?" he demanded down the telephone.

It was the hotel clerk who spoke. A gentleman was below begging that Mr. Gascoigne would spare him five minutes on a matter of urgent importance. The gentleman declined to mount. He would only say that his business had some connection with America.

"I'll be right down," Mr. Gascoigne announced, and hastened back to where Madelon was still engaged with the towels.

"Say, you're not in a hurry, are you?" he inquired.

"I do what you tell me," she assured him, clutching the mille note tightly in her fingers, and smiling at him bewitchingly. "I go home now—15, Avenue de Mimosas. I wait until you come."

Mr. Gascoigne hesitated. Madelon was looking very attractive, but the door was open and the visit of the gentleman downstairs intrigued him. He patted her on the shoulder.

"I'll be round directly after lunch," he promised. "We'll fix up something right away."

IN the hall the hotel clerk directed his attention to the Marquis, who, with sundry of the slightly shabby details of his toilet now amended, presented an impressive appearance. His manner, however, as he stepped forward to accost Mr. Gascoigne, was a little furtive. He had the air of not being entirely at his ease.

"Mr. Gascoigne, I believe," he murmured.

"That's my name," was the somewhat surprised admission. "What can I do for you?"

"I am the Marquis de Félan," the visitor announced. "I desire a few minutes' conversation with you—not here, if possible. Will you step across with me to the Café de Paris?"

"But I don't know you," Mr. Gascoigne objected. "What business can you have with me?"

"Business of little importance to myself, perhaps," was the guarded reply, "but of the utmost importance to you. I can put you in possession of information with regard to some business which you propose to transact to-day or to-morrow—very important information."

A light began to break in upon Mr. Gascoigne.

"Say, didn't I see you lunching with that fellow Billingham?" he demanded.

"You did," the Marquis acknowledged. "It is in connection with something which transpired at that luncheon——"

"I'll come right along with you," Mr. Gascoigne interrupted. "I've got a hat in the cloak-room here. One moment!"

The two men left the place together, the Marquis still with the air of one desiring to escape observation. He glanced to the right and to the left in constant disquietude. At the Café de Paris he led the way to a corner of the bar. Then he sat down with an air of relief.

"Now let's get to business," Mr. Gascoigne begged.

The Marquis glanced towards the bar-tender. His companion accepted the hint and ordered refreshments.

"My business," the Marquis commenced, "is that I have been insulted by a person who is, I believe, a fellow-countryman of yours."

"Samuel Billingham?" Mr. Gascoigne muttered.

"That is his name," the Marquis admitted. "You will understand, sir, that I am not a man of wealth, that I am indeed a very poor man. Under circumstances which I need not detail, I invited Mr. Billingham to oblige me with a small loan—no more than ten milles. It is there that he insults me."

"Wouldn't part, eh?" Mr. Gascoigne queried.

"On the contrary," the Marquis rejoined, "he offered to increase the amount, but on a condition so loathsome that to mention it gives me pain. He wished me to join in a plot to deceive you concerning the value of some shares in Arkansas."

"The devil he did!" the other exclaimed. "Say, this is interesting!"

"To me it was a situation most humiliating," the Marquis declared. "Tears were in my eyes as I listened to his infamous proposition. I made no promise. I left him. He confided in me the value of those shares and all about them. I say nothing. I make him no promise. He tempted me with the money. It is a terrible thing, Mr. Gascoigne, to be poor. Then I asked myself what an honourable man would do. I decided to come to you."

"How much did you say that loan was to be?" Mr. Gascoigne inquired.

"Ten milles—a paltry ten milles," the Marquis groaned.

Mr. Gascoigne was not a man who loved parting with money, but there were times

when he was prompt in action. He opened his pocket-book, counted out ten milles, and folded them up.

"Look here, Marquis," he said, "I'll be on the square with you. Tell me just what Samuel Billingham said about those shares and you can accept the loan from me instead of from him—accept it, too, with nothing on your conscience."

The Marquis finished a cocktail and made signs towards the bar.

"I will disclose the situation to you," he promised. "It gives me pain, but it is just retribution. One month ago, oil—how you say that?—gushed—from eleven wells on this property. The chairman of the company was there. He ordered everything to

"Say, do you know what this is?" he asked. "Guess you don't come across many of them. It's a mille note!"

be concealed. No one was to work, the secret was to be kept until after Monday. I know why—Mr. Billingham told me why. It is because you have the right to buy most of these shares at a low price."

Joseph Gascoigne leaned back in his chair. He thrust both hands into his trousers pockets, turned over his keys, and chuckled. He remained chuckling until the waiter directed his attention to the cocktails which he was serving.

"Say, this is great!" he declared, as he banished the man with a twenty-franc note. "I don't mind telling you, Marquis, that I couldn't get any definite information, but I had a sort of a feeling there was something doing down there. So old Samuel was going to do me out of my little deal, eh? Do you know what I shall do, Marquis?"

The latter shook his head politely.

"I shall go straight back to my sitting-room," Mr. Gascoigne continued, "and send that cable right away. I shall take the whole of the ten thousand shares. I'll risk your information being O.K. I believe in it, any way. Stick that ten milles in your pocket-book, Marquis, and if this comes off there will be another ten milles on the top of it, and you can pay me in the year two thousand."

The Marquis buttoned up the money; his expression was one of chastened content.

"It will remain for long on my conscience," he confided, "but I have felt it right to adopt this course. I regret it—I regret the disappointment to Mr. Billingham very much. Still, he should have known better than to have made suggestions to me of so infamous a nature."

Mr. Gascoigne sipped his second cocktail—an indulgence which he seldom permitted himself—and the world seemed a very pleasant place to him. He leaned still further back in his chair and listened to the music, and he thought of that other very pleasing little adventure soon to be prosecuted. It was quite some time before he and the Marquis parted; the Marquis on his way to the Casino, Mr. Gascoigne to his sitting-room. Arrived there he found everything as he had left it, but there was a little note addressed to him. He tore it open.

"Would monsieur kindly come to 15, Avenue de Mimosas on Monday—not before. My aunt is there. She leaves midday Monday and I shall be alone.

"Thanking monsieur for his generosity and anticipating.—MADELON."

Mr. Gascoigne's first impulse of disappointment hastily passed. After all, it was not long to wait. He drew the code-book towards him, ran his finger down the first page, and selected a phrase.

"HUNGERING. . . . Have decided to avail myself of option in Great Divide shares. Secure the whole ten thousand on my account."

Mr. Gascoigne smiled. He wrote the word "HUNGERING" upon the cable form and took it himself to the office.

"WHAT a dinner!" exclaimed François, the chief *maitre d'hôtel* at the restaurant of the Sporting Club.

"What a prince!" murmured his assistant, glancing at the hundred-franc note in his hand.

There was a great cluster of red roses in the centre of the table; a magnum of Clicquot in an ice pail by its side; an amazing menu on each of the three plates. Nevertheless the Marquis and Madelon entered the room a little anxiously. One glance, however, at their host's face and all was well. Mr. Samuel T. Billingham was very happy, and when he was happy he showed it.

"Mademoiselle, no guest so charming has ever graced my table," he murmured, as he bent over her hand. "If dresses like this are to be bought ready to wear in Monte Carlo it is, indeed, an amazing place. Marquis, success! The time has passed. I have my cable. To the surprise of many people in New York, Mr. Joseph Gascoigne cabled his decision not to exercise his option on those ten thousand shares."

"You relieve my mind greatly," the Marquis confessed. "I was afraid of some slip at the last moment."

They took their places. The details of the repast unfolded themselves. The Marquis and his niece exchanged ecstatic glances. Madelon also, in her way—like most well-brought-up young women—approved of good food and the best wine.

"It is a feast of celebration, this," Mr. Billingham declared, scarcely able to take his eyes off his beautiful guest. "We have achieved a veritable triumph. We have perpetrated a swindle for which the law cannot touch us. We have robbed a miserable, mean, miserly old skunk of what I think may turn out to be the best part of a million dollars. Let us see how we stand."

The Marquis's fingers shook as he lit a cigarette and sipped his wine.

"Your *douceurs* up to the present," this prince of adventurers continued, "are insignificant. The few francs I have advanced we will forget."

"There was my tip as chambermaid," Madelon murmured. "He gave me a mille note."

"A stingy business!" was her host's criticism. "We take no account of that either."

"I did a little better," the Marquis confessed. "I got ten milles for betraying your secret and informing him of the worth of his option."

Mr. Billingham waved his hand.

"You introduced a note of humour into the situation, Marquis," he declared. "It was a brain wave, that! That ten milles

"Mademoiselle, no guest so charming has ever graced my table," he murmured.

also we ignore. You are welcome to it. The *douceur* which I receive is fifteen thousand dollars. I myself will retain five thousand, there will be five thousand for you, mademoiselle, and five thousand for you, Marquis."

"It is princely!" Madelon gasped.

"It is seventy-five thousand francs," the Marquis faltered.

'It is some money," Mr. Billingham admitted, "but I tell you right here that without mademoiselle I might have found great difficulty in getting hold of the code. Of course, all that I did was to alter the terms. You, Marquis, kept Mr. Gascoigne engaged at the Café de Paris whilst I worked hard with my typewriter. I can say no

more than that I consider myself highly fortunate to have come across two assistants of such intelligence and," Mr. Billingham concluded with a sigh, " such charm."

" You are what we used to call in England 'a great dear,'" Madelon whispered. " I hope before long you will find something else for us to do."

"Sure," Mr. Billingham assented fervently. " Five thousand dollars is a pretty good sum, but it don't carry a man very far in Monte Carlo, and apart from the money there's the adventure. I don't look the part, but I guess I was born to be a pirate. I'm all for taking chances, for looking out for some skunk or another who's got more of the stuff than is good for him. I guess something else ought to turn up before very long."

" And meanwhile," the Marquis suggested, watching the refilling of his glass, " I think that we should drink a toast to our very dear friend, who must now be in great distress of mind."

" Poor old Joe ! " Mr. Billingham murmured, as he raised his glass.

THE first glimmering of uneasiness came to Mr. Joseph Gascoigne when he demanded a *petite voiture* and asked to be driven to 15, Avenue de Mimosas. The driver looked blank, and appealed to the concierge, who shook his head.

" There is no such street, sir," he announced. " I have lived in Monte Carlo for many years and I can assure you that there is no such place as the Avenue de Mimosas."

Mr. Gascoigne hesitated for a moment, bestowed an inadequate *pourboire* upon the coachman, and stepped back into the hotel, Was it possible that the girl was fooling him ; had taken his mille and gone off ? He ascended to his room and made cautious inquiries of the valet. Yes, the young woman had left unexpectedly. She had made no complaint, but simply stated that she could not continue the work. As for her address, she had given none. The valet was quite sure that there was no such street as the Avenue de Mimosas in Monte Carlo.

Mr. Gascoigne opened a cable, brought in at that moment, with eager fingers. As he read it his face grew first bewildered, then white and evil.

" Am astonished that you have decided not to exercise option, but have acted according to your instructions. Venture assure you that you have made great mistake."

Mr. Gascoigne almost snatched at his manuscript code-book, and tore open the pages. There it was, without a doubt :—

" HUNGERING. . . . Have decided to avail myself of option in Great Divide shares. Secure the whole ten thousand on my account."

He sat down at once and wrote a cable :—

" What the hell do you mean ? Cable HUNGERING. Word for word translation : ' Have decided to avail myself of option in Great Divide shares. Secure the whole ten thousand on my account. Reply."

It was about twelve o'clock next morning when the reply came. It was given to him just as he was leaving the Hôtel de Paris for a restless stroll along the Terrace. He tore it open and read :—

" Exact translation HUNGERING attested here by whole office : ' Have decided not to exercise option on shares in Great Divide. Please inform company.' "

Mr. Gascoigne clutched the cablegram in his fingers. He looked across the Square with vacant eyes. Such a mistake in transcription seemed incredible. And then there turned the corner Mr. Samuel T. Billingham, resplendent in a suit of light grey, with a carnation in his buttonhole and a cigar in his mouth. On one side walked the Marquis, looking very spruce and smiling, and on the other, very becomingly dressed, and not in the least like a chambermaid, was Madelon. Suddenly something in one of her graceful movements, or perhaps the ripple of her laughter, was startlingly reminiscent of Mr. Gascoigne's disappointed hopes. A hideous clear-sightedness seized him. He remembered the manuscript code-book open upon his table, his absence for the best part of an hour with the Marquis, some slight surprise at the freshness of the type the next time he had consulted the code-book, and finally Mr. Samuel T. Billingham's connection with the Great Divide Oil Company and his reputation. They passed him ; Mr. Billingham with a little wave of the hand and a solemn wink, Madelon with a frank laugh into his face, and the Marquis with a patronizing nod. He looked after them and he shook his fist. He was cold with fury, but with a mighty effort at self-restraint he remained silent.

For, although it was very certain he had been robbed, there was really nothing he could do !

(Next month : " The Numbers of Death.")

Clustering Round Young Bingo

by

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY A. WALLIS MILLS

I BLOTTED the last page of my manuscript and sank back, feeling more or less of a spent force. After incredible sweat of the old brow the thing seemed to be in pretty fair shape, and I was just reading it through and debating whether to bung in another paragraph at the end, when there was a tap at the door and Jeeves appeared.

"Mrs. Travers, sir, on the telephone."

"Oh?" I said. Preoccupied, don't you know.

"Yes, sir. She presents her compliments and would be glad to know what progress you have made with the article which you are writing for her."

"Jeeves, can I mention men's knee-length underclothing in a woman's paper?"

"No, sir."

"Then tell her it's finished."

"Very good, sir."

"And, Jeeves, when you're through, come back. I want you to cast your eye over this effort and give it the O.K."

My Aunt Dahlia, who runs a woman's paper called *Milady's Boudoir*, had recently backed me into a corner and made me promise to write her a few authoritative words for her "Husbands and Brothers" page on "What the Well-Dressed Man is Wearing." I believe in encouraging aunts, when deserving; and, as there are many worse eggs than her knocking about the metrop. I had consented blithely. But I give you my honest word that if I had had the foggiest notion of what I was letting myself in for, not even a nephew's devotion would have kept me from giving her the raspberry. A deuce of a job it had been, taxing the physique to the utmost. I don't wonder now that all these author blokes have bald heads and faces like birds who have suffered.

"Jeeves," I said, when he came back, "you don't read a paper called *Milady's Boudoir* by any chance, do you?"

"No, sir. The periodical has not come to my notice."

"Well, spring sixpence on it next week, because this article will appear in it. Wooster on the well-dressed man, don't you know."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes, indeed, Jeeves. I've rather extended myself over this little bijou. There's a bit about socks that I think you will like."

He took the manuscript, brooded over it, and smiled a gentle, approving smile.

"The sock passage is quite in the proper vein, sir," he said.

"Well expressed, what?"

"Extremely, sir."

I watched him narrowly as he read on, and, as I was expecting, what you might call the love-light suddenly died out of his eyes. I braced myself for an unpleasant scene.

"Come to the bit about soft silk shirts for evening wear?" I asked, carelessly.

"Yes, sir," said Jeeves, in a low, cold voice, as if he had been bitten in the leg by a personal friend. "And if I may be pardoned for saying so——"

"You don't like it?"

"No, sir. I do not. Soft silk shirts with evening costume are not worn, sir."

"Jeeves," I said, looking the blighter diametrically in the centre of the eyeball, "they're dashed well going to be. I may as well tell you now that I have ordered a dozen of those shirtings from Peabody and Simms, and it's no good looking like that, because I am jolly well adamant."

"If I might——"

"No, Jeeves," I said, raising my hand, "argument is useless. Nobody has a greater respect than I have for your judgment in

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socks, in ties, and—I will go farther—in spats; but when it comes to evening shirts your nerve seems to fail you. You have no vision. You are prejudiced and reactionary. Hidebound is the word that suggests itself. It may interest you to learn that when I was at Le Touquet the Prince of Wales buzzed into the Casino one night with soft silk shirt complete."

"His Royal Highness, sir, may permit himself a certain licence which in your own case——"

"No, Jeeves," I said, firmly, "it's no use. When we Woosters are adamant, we are—well, adamant, if you know what I mean."

"Very good, sir."

I could see the man was wounded, and, of course, the whole episode had been extremely jarring and unpleasant; but these things have to be gone through. Is one a serf or isn't one? That's what it all boils down to. Having made my point, I changed the subject.

"Well, that's that," I said. "We now approach another topic. Do you know any housemaids, Jeeves?"

"Housemaids, sir?"

"Come, come, Jeeves, you know what housemaids are. Females who get housemaid's knee."

"Are you requiring a housemaid, sir?"

"No, but Mr. Little is. I met him at the club a couple of days ago, and he told me that Mrs. Little is offering rich rewards to anybody who will find her one guaranteed to go light on the china."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes. The one now in office apparently runs through the *objets d'art* like a typhoon, simoom, or sirocco. So if you know any——"

"I know a great many, sir. Some intimately, others mere acquaintances."

"Well, start digging round among the old pals. And now the hat, the stick, and other necessaries. I must be getting along and handing in this article."

THE offices of *Milady's Boudoir* were in one of those rummy streets in the Covent Garden neighbourhood; and I had just got to the door, after wading through a deep top-dressing of old cabbages and tomatoes, when who should come out but Mrs. Little. She greeted me with the warmth due to the old family friend, in spite of the fact that I hadn't been round to the house for a goodish while.

"Whatever are you doing in these parts, Bertie? I thought you never came east of Leicester Square."

"I've come to deliver an article of sorts which my Aunt Dahlia asked me to write. She edits a species of journal up those stairs. *Milady's Boudoir.*"

"What a coincidence! I have just promised to write an article for her, too."

"Don't you do it," I said, earnestly. "You've simply no notion what a ghastly labour—— Oh, but, of course, I was forgetting. You're used to it, what?"

Silly of me to have talked like that. Young Bingo Little, if you remember, had married the famous female novelist, Rosie M. Banks, author of some of the most pronounced and widely-read tripe ever put on the market. Naturally a mere article would be pie for her.

"No, I don't think it will give me much trouble," she said. "Your aunt has suggested a most delightful subject."

"That's good. By the way, I spoke to my man Jeeves about getting you a housemaid. He knows all the hummers."

"Thank you so much. Oh, are you doing anything to-morrow night?"

"Not a thing."

"Then do come and dine with us. Your aunt is coming, and hopes to bring your uncle. I am looking forward to meeting him."

"Thanks. Delighted."

I meant it, too. The Little household may be weak on housemaids, but it is right there when it comes to cooks. Somewhere or other some time ago Bingo's missus managed to dig up a Frenchman of the most extraordinary vim and skill. A most amazing Johnnie who dishes a wicked *ragoût*. Old Bingo has put on at least ten pounds in weight since this fellow Anatole arrived in the home.

"At eight, then."

"Right. Thanks ever so much."

She popped off, and I went upstairs to hand in my copy, as we boys of the Press call it. I found Aunt Dahlia immersed to the gills in papers of all descriptions.

I am not much of a lad for my relatives as a general thing, but I've always been very pally with Aunt Dahlia. She married my Uncle Thomas—between ourselves a bit of a squirt—the year Bluebottle won the Cambridgeshire; and they hadn't got halfway down the aisle before I was saying to myself, "That woman is much too good for the old bird." Aunt Dahlia is a large, genial soul, the sort you see in dozens on the hunting-field. As a matter of fact, until she married Uncle Thomas, she put in most of her time on horseback; but he won't live in the country, so nowadays she expends her energy on this paper of hers.

She came to the surface as I entered, and flung a cheery book at my head.

"Hullo, Bertie! I say, have you really finished that article?"

"To the last comma."

"Good boy! My gosh, I'll bet it's rotten."

"On the contrary, it is extremely hot stuff, and most of it approved by Jeeves, what's more. The bit about soft silk shirts got in amongst him a trifle; but you can take it from me, Aunt Dahlia, that they are the latest yodel and will be much seen at first nights and other occasions where Society assembles."

"Your man Jeeves," said Aunt Dahlia, flinging the article into a basket and skewering a few loose pieces of paper on a sort of meat-hook, "is a wash-out, and you can tell him I said so."

"Oh, come," I said. "He may not be sound on shirtings——"

"I'm not referring to that. As long as a week ago I asked him to get me a cook, and he hasn't found one yet."

"Great Scott! Is Jeeves a domestic employment agency? Mrs. Little wants him to find her a housemaid. I met her outside. She tells me she's doing something for you."

"Yes, thank goodness. I'm relying on it to bump the circulation up a bit. I can't read her stuff myself, but women love it. Her name on the cover will mean a lot. And we need it."

"Paper not doing well?"

"It's doing all right really, but it's got to be a slow job building up a circulation."

"I suppose so."

"I can get Tom to see that in his lucid moments," said Aunt Dahlia, skewering a few more papers. "But just at present the poor fathead has got one of his pessimistic spells. It's entirely due to that mechanic who calls herself a cook. A few more of her alleged dinners, and Tom will refuse to go on paying the printers' bills."

"You don't mean that!"

"I do mean it. There was what she called a *ris de veau à la financière* last night which made him talk for three-quarters of an hour about good money going to waste and nothing to show for it."

"No, Jeeves," I said, raising my hand, "argument is useless."

I quite understood, and I was dashed sorry for her. My Uncle Thomas is a cove who made a colossal pile of money out in the East, but in doing so put his digestion on the blink. This has made him a tricky proposition to handle. Many a time I've lunched with him and found him perfectly chirpy up to the fish, only to have him turn blue on me well before the cheese.

Who was that lad they used to try to make me read at Oxford? Ship—Shop—Schopenhauer. That's the name. A grouch of the most pronounced description. Well, Uncle Thomas, when his gastric juices have been giving him the elbow, can make Schopenhauer look like Pollyanna. And the worst of it is, from Aunt Dahlia's point of view, that on these occasions he always seems to think he's on the brink of ruin and wants to start to economize.

"Pretty tough," I said. "Well, anyway, he'll get one good dinner to-morrow night at the Littles'."

"Can you guarantee that, Bertie?" asked Aunt Dahlia, earnestly. "I simply daren't risk unleashing him on anything at all wonky."

"They've got a marvellous cook. I haven't been round there for some time, but unless he's lost his form of two months ago Uncle Thomas is going to have the treat of a lifetime."

"It'll only make it all the worse for him, coming back to our steak-incinerator," said Aunt Dahlia, a bit on the Schopenhauer side herself.

THE little nest where Bingo and his bride had settled themselves was up in St. John's Wood; one of those rather jolly houses with a bit of garden. When I got there on the following night, I found that I was the last to weigh in. Aunt Dahlia was chatting with Rosie in a corner, while Uncle Thomas, standing by the mantelpiece with Bingo, sucked down a cocktail in a frowning, suspicious sort of manner, rather like a chappie having a short snort before dining with the Borgias: as if he were saying to himself that, even if this particular cocktail wasn't poisoned, he was bound to cop it later on.

Well, I hadn't expected anything in the nature of beaming *joie de vivre* from Uncle Thomas, so I didn't pay much attention to him. What did surprise me was the extraordinary gloom of young Bingo. You may say what you like against Bingo, but nobody has ever found him a depressing host. Why, many a time in the days of his bachelorhood I've known him to start throwing bread before the soup course. Yet now he and Uncle Thomas were a pair. He looked haggard and careworn, like a Borgia who had suddenly remembered that he had forgotten to shove cyanide in the *consommé*, and the dinner-gong due any moment.

And the mystery wasn't helped at all by the one remark he made to me before conversation became general. As he poured out my cocktail, he suddenly bent forward.

"Bertie," he whispered, in a nasty, feverish manner, "I want to see you. Life and death matter. Be in to-morrow morning."

That was all. Immediately after that the starting-gun went and we toddled down to the festive. And from that moment, I'm bound to say, in the superior interest of the proceedings he rather faded out of my mind. For good old Anatole, braced presumably by the fact of there being guests, had absolutely surpassed himself.

I am not a man who speaks hastily in these matters. I weigh my words. And I say again that Anatole had surpassed himself. It was as good a dinner as I have ever absorbed, and it revived Uncle Thomas like a watered flower. As we sat down he was saying some things about the Government which they wouldn't have cared to hear. With the *consommé pâté d'Italie* he said but what could you expect nowadays? With the *paupiettes de sole à la princesse* he admitted rather decently that the Government couldn't be held responsible for the rotten weather, anyway. And shortly after the *caneton Aylesbury à la broche* he was practically giving the lads the benefit of his whole-hearted support.

And all the time young Bingo looking like an owl with a secret sorrow. Rummy!

I thought about it a good deal as I walked home, and I was hoping he wouldn't roll round with his hard-luck story too early in the morning. He had the air of one who intends to charge in at about six-thirty.

Jeeves was waiting up for me when I got back.

"A pleasant dinner, sir?" he said.

"Magnificent, Jeeves."

"I am glad to hear that, sir. Mr. George Travers rang up on the telephone shortly after you had left. He was extremely desirous that you should join him at Harrogate, sir. He leaves for that town by an early train to-morrow."

My Uncle George is a festive old bird who has made a habit for years of doing himself a dashed sight too well, with the result that he's always got Harrogate or Buxton hanging over him like the sword of what's-his-name. And he hates going there alone.

"It can't be done," I said. Uncle George is bad enough in London, and I wasn't going to let myself be cooped up with him in one of these cure-places.

"He was extremely urgent, sir."

"No, Jeeves," I said, firmly. "I am always anxious to oblige, but Uncle George—no, no! I mean to say, what?"

"Very good, sir," said Jeeves.

It was a pleasure to hear the way he said it. Docile the man was becoming, absolutely docile. It just showed that I had been right in putting my foot down about those shirts.

WHEN Bingo showed up next morning, I had had breakfast and was all ready for him. Jeeves shot him into the presence, and he sat down on the bed.

"Good morning, Bertie," said young Bingo.

"Good morning, old thing," I replied, courteously.

"Don't go, Jeeves," said young Bingo hollowly. "Wait."

"Sir?"

" Remain. Stay. Cluster round. I shall need you."

" Very good, sir,"

Bingo lit a cigarette and frowned bleakly at the wallpaper.

" Bertie," he said, " the most frightful calamity has occurred. Unless something is done, and done right speedily, my social prestige is doomed, my self-respect will be obliterated, my name will be mud, and I shall not dare to show my face in the West-end of London again."

" My aunt ! " I cried, deeply impressed.

" Exactly," said young Bingo, with a hollow laugh. " You have put it in a nut-shell. The whole trouble is due to your blasted aunt."

" Which blasted aunt ? Specify, old thing. I have so many."

" Mrs. Travers. The one who runs that infernal paper."

" Oh, no, dash it, old man," I protested. " She's the only decent aunt I've got. Jeeves, you will bear me out in this ? "

" Such has always been my impression, I must confess, sir."

" Well, get rid of it, then," said young Bingo. " The woman is a menace to society, a home-wrecker, and a pest. Do you know what she's done ? She's got Rosie to write an article for that rag of hers."

" I know that."

" Yes, but you don't know what it's about."

" No. She only told me Aunt Dahlia had given her a splendid idea for the thing."

" It's about me ! "

" You ? "

" Yes, me ! Me ! And do you know what it's called ? It is called ' How I Keep the Love of My Husband-Baby.' "

" My what ? "

" Husband-baby ! "

" What's a husband-baby ? "

" I am, apparently," said young Bingo, with much bitterness. " I am also, according to this article, a lot of other things which I have too much sense of decency to repeat even to an old friend. This beastly composition, in short, is one of those things they call ' human interest stories ' ; one of those intimate revelations of married life over which the female public loves to gloat ; all about Rosie and me and what she does when I come home cross, and so on. I tell you, Bertie, I am still blushing all over at the recollection of something she says in paragraph two."

" What ? "

" I decline to tell you. But you can take it from me that it's the edge. Nobody could be fonder of Rosie than I am, but—dear, sensible girl as she is in ordinary life—the moment she gets in front of a dictating-machine she becomes absolutely maudlin. Bertie, that article must not appear ! "

" But——"

" If it does I shall have to resign from my clubs, grow a beard, and become a hermit. I shall not be able to face the world."

" Aren't you pitching it a bit strong, old lad ? " I said. " Jeeves, don't you think he's pitching it a bit strong ? "

" Well, sir——"

" I am pitching it feebly," said young Bingo, earnestly. " You haven't heard the thing. I have. Rosie shoved the cylinder on the dictating-machine last night before dinner, and it was grisly to hear the instrument croaking out those awful sentences. If that article appears I shall be kidded to death by every pal I've got. Bertie," he said, his voice sinking to a hoarse whisper, " you have about as much imagination as a warthog, but surely even you can picture to yourself what Jimmy Bowles and Tuppy Rogers, to name only two, will say when they see me referred to in print as ' half god, half prattling, mischievous child ' ? "

I jolly well could.

" She doesn't say that ? " I gasped.

" She certainly does. And when I tell you that I selected that particular quotation because it's about the only one I can stand hearing spoken, you will realize what I'm up against."

I PICKED at the coverlet. I had been a pal of Bingo's for many years, and we Woosters stand by our pals.

" Jeeves," I said, " you have heard ? "

" Yes, sir."

" The position is serious."

" Yes, sir."

" We must cluster round."

" Yes, sir."

" Does anything suggest itself to you ? "

" Yes, sir."

" What ! You don't really mean that ? "

" Yes, sir."

" Bingo," I said, " the sun is still shining. Something suggests itself to Jeeves."

" Jeeves," said young Bingo in a quivering voice, " if you see me through this fearful crisis, ask of me what you will even unto half my kingdom."

" The matter," said Jeeves, " fits in very nicely, sir, with another mission which was entrusted to me this morning."

" What do you mean ? "

" Mrs. Travers rang me up on the telephone shortly before I brought you your tea, sir, and was most urgent that I should endeavour to persuade Mr. Little's cook to leave Mr. Little's service and join her staff. It appears that Mr. Travers was fascinated by the man's ability, sir, and talked far into the night of his astonishing gifts."

Young Bingo uttered a frightful cry of agony.

"What! Is that—that buzzard trying to pinch our cook?"

"Yes, sir."

"After eating our bread and salt, dammit?"

"I fear, sir," sighed Jeeves, "that when it comes to a matter of cooks ladies have but a rudimentary sense of morality."

"Half a second, Bingo," I said, as the fellow seemed about to plunge into something of an oration. "How does this fit in with the other thing, Jeeves?"

"Well, sir, it has been my experience that no lady can ever forgive another lady for taking a really good cook away from her. I am convinced that, if I am able to accomplish the mission which Mrs. Travers entrusted to me, an instant breach of cordial relations must inevitably ensue. Mrs. Little will, I feel certain, be so aggrieved with Mrs. Travers that she will decline to contribute to her paper. We shall therefore not only bring happiness to Mr. Travers, but also suppress the article. Thus killing two birds with one stone, if I may use the expression, sir."

"Certainly you may use the expression, Jeeves," I said, cordially. "And I may add that in my opinion this is one of your best and ripest."

"Yes, but I say, you know," bleated young Bingo. "I mean to say—old Anatole, I mean—what I'm driving at is that he's a cook in a million."

"You poor chump, if he wasn't there would be no point in the scheme."

"Yes, but what I mean—I shall miss him, you know. Miss him fearfully."

"Good heavens!" I cried. "Don't tell me that you are thinking of your tummy in a crisis like this?"

Bingo sighed heavily.

"Oh, all right," he said. "I suppose it's a case of the surgeon's knife. All right, Jeeves, you may carry on. Yes, carry on, Jeeves. Yes, yes, Jeeves, carry on. I'll look in to-morrow morning and hear what you have to report."

And with bowed head young Bingo biffed off.

HE was bright and early next morning. In fact, he turned up at such an indecent hour that Jeeves very properly refused to allow him to break in on my slumbers.

By the time I was awake and receiving, he and Jeeves had had a heart-to-heart chat in the kitchen; and when Bingo eventually crept into my room I could see by the look on his face that something had gone wrong.

"It's all off," he said, slumping down on the bed.

"Off?"

"Yes; that cook-pinching business. Jeeves tells me he saw Anatole last night, and Anatole refused to leave."

"But surely Aunt Dahlia had the sense to offer him more than he was getting with you?"

"The sky was the limit, as far as she was concerned. Nevertheless, he refused to skid. It seems he's in love with our parlourmaid."

"But you haven't got a parlourmaid."

"We have got a parlourmaid."

"I've never seen her. A sort of bloke who looked like a provincial undertaker waited at table the night before last."

"That was the local greengrocer, who comes to help out when desired. The parlourmaid is away on her holiday—or was till last night. She returned about ten minutes before Jeeves made his call, and Anatole, I take it, was in such a state of elation and devotion and what not on seeing her again that the contents of the Mint wouldn't have bribed him to part from her."

"But look here, Bingo," I said, "this is all rot. I see the solution right off. I'm surprised that a bloke of Jeeves's mentality overlooked it. Aunt Dahlia must engage the parlourmaid as well as Anatole. Then they won't be parted."

"I thought of that, too. Naturally."

"I bet you didn't."

"I certainly did."

"Well, what's wrong with the scheme?"

"It can't be worked. If your aunt engaged our parlourmaid she would have to sack her own, wouldn't she?"

"Well?"

"Well, if she sacks her parlourmaid, it will mean that the chauffeur will quit. He's in love with her."

"With my aunt?"

"No, with the parlourmaid. And apparently he's the only chauffeur your uncle has ever found who drives carefully enough for him."

I gave it up. I had never imagined before that life below stairs was so frightfully mixed up with what these coves call the sex complex. The *personnel* of domestic staffs seemed to pair off like characters in a musical comedy.

"Oh!" I said. "Well, that being so, we do seem to be more or less stymied. That article will have to appear after all, what?"

"No, it won't."

"Has Jeeves thought of another scheme?"

"No, but I have." Bingo bent forward and patted my knee affectionately. "Look

here, Bertie," he said, " you and I were at school together. You'll admit that ? "

" Yes, but——"

" And you're a fellow who never lets a pal down. That's well known, isn't it ? "

" Yes, but listen, Bingo——"

" You'll cluster round. Of course you will. As if," said Bingo with a scornful laugh, " I ever doubted it ! You won't let an old school-friend down in his hour of need. Not you. Not Bertie Wooster. No, no ! "

" Yes, but just one moment——"

Bingo massaged my shoulder soothingly.

" It's all settled, Bertie, old man. Nothing for you to worry about. Nothing whatever. I see now that we made a mistake in ever trying to tackle this job in Jeeves's silly, roundabout way. Much better to charge straight ahead without any of that finesse and fooling about. This afternoon I'm going to take Rosie to a *matinée*. I shall leave the window of her study open, and when we have got well away you will climb in, pinch the cylinder, and pop off again. It's absurdly simple."

" Yes, but half a second——"

" I know what you're going to say," said Bingo, raising his hand. " How are you to find the cylinder ? That's what's bothering you, isn't it ? Well, it'll be quite easy. Not a chance of a mistake. The thing is in the top left-hand drawer of the desk, and the drawer will be left unlocked because Rosie's stenographer is to come round at four o'clock and type the thing."

"I fear, sir," sighed Jeeves, "that when it comes to a matter of cooks ladies have but a rudimentary sense of morality."

"Now listen, Bingo," I said. "I'm frightfully sorry for you and all that, but I must firmly draw the line at burglary. I ——"

He gazed at me, astonished and hurt.

"Is this Bertie Wooster speaking?" he said in a low voice.

"Yes, it is!"

"But, Bertie," he said gently, "we agreed that you were at school with me."

"I don't care."

"At school, Bertie. The dear old school."

"I don't care. I will not——"

"Bertie!"

"I will not——"

"Bertie!"

"No!"

"Bertie!"

"Oh, all right," I said.

"There," said young Bingo, patting me on the shoulder, "spoke the true Bertram Wooster!"

I DON'T know if it has ever occurred to you, but to the thoughtful cove there is something dashed reassuring in all the reports of burglaries you read in the papers. I mean, if you're keen on Great Britain maintaining her prestige and all that. I mean, there can't be much wrong with the *morale* of a country whose sons go in to such a large extent for house-breaking, because you can take it from me that the job requires a nerve of the most cast-iron description. I suppose I was walking up and down in front of that house for half an hour before I could bring myself to dash in at the front gate and slide round to the side where the study-window was. And even then I stood for about ten minutes cowering against the wall and listening for police-whistles.

Eventually, however, I braced myself up and got to business. The study was on the ground floor and the window was nice and large, and, what is more, wide open. I got the old knee over the sill, gave a jerk which took an inch of skin off my ankle, and hopped down into the room. And there I was, if you follow me.

I stood for a moment, listening. Everything seemed to be all right. I was apparently alone in the world.

In fact, I was so much alone that the atmosphere seemed positively creepy. You know how it is on these occasions. There was a clock on the mantelpiece that ticked in a slow, shocked sort of way that was dashed unpleasant. And over the clock a large portrait stared at me with a good deal of dislike and suspicion. It was a portrait of somebody's grandfather. Whether he was Rosie's or Bingo's I didn't know, but he was certainly a grandfather. In fact, I wouldn't be prepared to swear that he wasn't a great-grandfather. He was a big, stout old buffer in a high collar that seemed to hurt his neck, for he had drawn his chin back a goodish way and was looking down his nose as much as to say, "*You* made me put this dam' thing on!"

Well, it was only a step to the desk, and nothing between me and it but a brown shaggy rug; so I avoided grandfather's eye and, summoning up the good old bulldog courage of the Woosters, moved forward and started to navigate the rug. And I had hardly taken a step when the south-east corner of it suddenly detached itself from the rest and sat up with a snuffle.

Well, I mean to say, to bear yourself fittingly in the face of an occurrence of this sort you want to be one of those strong, silent, phlegmatic birds who are ready for anything. This type of bloke, I imagine, would simply have cocked an eye at the rug, said to himself, "Ah, a Pekingese dog, and quite a good one, too!" and started at once to make cordial overtures to the animal in order to win its sympathy and moral support. I suppose I must be one of the neurotic younger generation you read about in the papers nowadays, because it was pretty plain within half a second that I wasn't strong and I wasn't phlegmatic. This wouldn't have mattered so much, but I wasn't silent either. In the emotion of the moment I let out a sort of sharp yowl and leaped about four feet in a north-westerly direction. And there was a crash that sounded as though somebody had touched off a bomb.

What a female novelist wants with an occasional table in her study containing a vase, two framed photographs, a saucer, a lacquer box, and a jar of pot-pourri, I don't know; but that was what Bingo's Rosie had, and I caught it squarely with my right hip and knocked it endways. It seemed to me for a moment as if the whole world had dissolved into a kind of cataract of glass and china. A few years ago, when I legged it to America to elude my Aunt Agatha, who was out with her hatchet, I remember going to Niagara and listening to the Falls. They made much the same sort of row, but not so loud.

And at the same instant the dog began to bark.

It was a small dog—the sort of animal from which you would have expected a noise like a squeaking slate-pencil; but it was simply baying. It had retired into a corner, and was leaning against the wall with bulging eyes; and every two seconds it chucked its head back in a kind of pained way and let out another terrific bellow.

Well, I know when I'm licked. I was

I caught the table squarely with my right hip and knocked it endways. It seemed to me for a moment as if the whole world had dissolved into a kind of cataract of glass and china.

sorry for Bingo and regretted the necessity of having to let him down; but the time had come, I felt, to shift. "Outside for Bertram!" was the slogan, and I took a running leap at the window and scrambled through.

And there on the path, as if they had been waiting for me by appointment, stood a policeman and a parlourmaid.

It was an embarrassing moment.

"Oh—er—there you are!" I said. And there was what you might call a contemplative silence for a moment.

"I told you I heard something," said the parlourmaid.

The policeman was regarding me in a boiled way.

"What's all this?" he asked.

I smiled in a sort of saint-like manner.

"It's a little hard to explain," I said.

"Yes, it is!" said the policeman.

"I was just—er—just having a look round, you know. Old friend of the family, you understand."

"How did you get in?"

"Through the window. Being an old friend of the family, if you follow me."

"Old friend of the family, are you?"

"Oh, very. Very. Very old. Oh, a very old friend of the family."

"I've never seen him before," said the parlourmaid.

I LOOKED at the girl with positive loathing. How she could have inspired affection in anyone, even a French cook, beat me. Not that she was a bad-looking girl, mind you. Not at all. On another and happier occasion I might even have thought her rather pretty. But now she seemed one of the most unpleasant females I had ever encountered.

"No," I said. "You have never seen me before. But I'm an old friend of the family."

"Then why didn't you ring at the front door?"

"I didn't want to give any trouble."

"It's no trouble answering front doors, that being what you're paid for," said the parlourmaid, virtuously. "I've never seen him before in my life," she added, perfectly gratuitously. A horrid girl.

"Well, look here," I said, with an inspiration, "the undertaker knows me."

"What undertaker?"

"The cove who was waiting at table when I dined here the night before last."

"Did the undertaker wait at table on the sixteenth instant?" asked the policeman.

"Of course he didn't," said the parlourmaid.

"Well, he looked like—— By Jove, no. I remember now. He was the greengrocer."

"On the sixteenth instant," said the policeman—pompous ass!—"did the greengrocer——?"

"Yes, he did, if you want to know," said the parlourmaid. She seemed disappointed and baffled, like a tigress that sees its prey being sneaked away from it. Then she brightened. "But this fellow could easily have found that out by asking round about."

A perfectly poisonous girl.

"What's your name?" asked the policeman.

"Well, I say, do you mind awfully if I don't give my name, because——"

"Suit yourself. You'll have to tell it to the magistrate."

"Oh, no, I say, dash it!"

"I think you'd better come along."

"But I say, really, you know, I am an old friend of the family. Why, by Jove, now I remember, there's a photograph of me in the drawing-room. Well, I mean, that shows you!"

"If there is," said the policeman.

"I've never seen it," said the parlourmaid

I absolutely hated this girl.

"You would have seen it if you had done your dusting more conscientiously," I said, severely. And I meant it to sting, by Jove!

"It is not a parlourmaid's place to dust the drawing-room," she sniffed, haughtily.

"No," I said, bitterly. "It seems to be a parlourmaid's place to lurk about and hang about and—er—waste her time fooling about in the garden with policemen who ought to be busy about their duties elsewhere."

"It's a parlourmaid's place to open the front door to visitors. Them that don't come in through windows."

I perceived that I was getting the loser's end of the thing. I tried to be conciliatory.

"My dear old parlourmaid," I said, "don't let us descend to vulgar wrangling. All I'm driving at is that there is a photograph of me in the drawing-room, cared for and dusted by whom I know not; and this photograph will, I think, prove to you that I am an old friend of the family. I fancy so, officer?"

"If it's there," said the man, in a grudging way.

"Oh, it's there all right. Oh, yes, it's there."

"Well, we'll go to the drawing-room and see."

"Spoken like a man, my dear old policeman," I said.

THE drawing-room was on the first floor, and the photograph was on the table by the fireplace. Only, if you understand me, it wasn't. What I mean is, there was the fireplace, and there was the table by the fireplace, but, by Jove, not a sign

of any photograph of me whatsoever. A photograph of Bingo, yes. A photograph of Bingo's uncle, Lord Bittlesham, right. A photograph of Mrs. Bingo, three-quarter face, with a tender smile on her lips, all present and correct. But of anything resembling Bertram Wooster, not a trace.

"Ho!" said the policeman.

"But, dash it, it was there the night before last."

"Ho!" he said again. "Ho! Ho!" As if he were starting a drinking-chorus in a comic opera, confound him.

Then I got what amounted to the brain-wave of a lifetime.

"Who dusts these things?" I said, turning on the parlourmaid.

"I don't."

"I didn't say you did. I said who did."

"Mary. The housemaid, of course."

"Exactly. As I suspected. As I foresaw. Mary, officer, is notoriously the worst smasher in London. There have been complaints about her on all sides. You see what has happened? The wretched girl has broken the glass of my photograph and, not being willing to come forward and admit it in an honest, manly way, has taken the thing off and concealed it somewhere."

"Ho!" said the policeman, still working through the drinking-chorus.

"Well, ask her. Go down and ask her."

"You go down and ask her," said the policeman to the parlourmaid. "If it's going to make him any happier."

The parlourmaid left the room, casting a pestilential glance at me over her shoulder as she went. I'm not sure she didn't say "Ho!" too. And then there was a bit of a lull. The policeman took up a position with a large beefy back against the door, and I wandered to and fro and hither and yonder.

"What are you playing at?" demanded the policeman.

"Just looking round. They may have moved the thing."

"Ho!"

And then there was another bit of a lull. And suddenly I found myself by the window, and, by Jove, it was six inches open at the bottom. And the world beyond looked so bright and sunny and—— Well, I don't claim that I am a particularly swift thinker, but once more something seemed to whisper "Outside for Bertram!" I slid my fingers nonchalantly under the sash, gave a hefty heave, and up she came. And the next moment I was in a laurel bush, feeling like the cross which marks the spot where the accident occurred.

A large red face appeared in the window. I got up and skipped lightly to the gate.

"Hi!" shouted the policeman.

"Ho!" I replied, and went forth, moving well.

"This," I said to myself, as I hailed a passing cab and sank back on the cushions, "is the last time I try to do anything for young Bingo!"

These sentiments I expressed in no guarded language to Jeeves when I was back in the old flat with my feet on the mantelpiece, pushing down a soothing whisky-and.

"Never again, Jeeves!" I said. "Never again!"

"Well, sir——"

"No, never again!"

"Well, sir——"

"What do you mean, 'Well, sir'? What are you driving at?"

"Well, sir, Mr. Little is an extremely persistent young gentleman, and yours, if I may say so, sir, is a yielding and obliging nature——"

"You don't think that young Bingo would have the immortal rind to try to get me into some other foul enterprise?"

"I should say that it was more than probable, sir."

I removed the dogs swiftly from the mantelpiece, and jumped up, all of a twitter.

"Jeeves, what would you advise?"

"Well, sir, I think a little change of scene would be judicious."

"Do a bolt?"

"Precisely, sir. If I might suggest it, sir, why not change your mind and join Mr. George Travers at Harrogate?"

"Oh, I say, Jeeves!"

"You would be out of what I might describe as the danger zone there, sir."

"Perhaps you're right, Jeeves," I said, thoughtfully. "Yes, possibly you're right. How far is Harrogate from London?"

"Two hundred and six miles, sir."

"Yes, I think you're right. Is there a train this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir. You could catch it quite easily."

"All right, then. Bung a few necessaries in a bag."

"I have already done so, sir."

"Ho!" I said.

IT'S a rummy thing, but when you come down to it Jeeves is always right. He had tried to cheer me up at the station by saying that I would not find Harrogate unpleasant, and, by Jove, he was perfectly correct. What I had overlooked, when examining the project, was the fact that I should be in the middle of a bevy of blokes who were taking the cure and I shouldn't be taking it myself. You've no notion what a dashed cosy, satisfying feeling that gives a fellow.

I mean to say, there was old Uncle George, for instance. The medicine-man, having given him the once-over, had ordered him to abstain from all alcoholic liquids, and in addition to tool down the hill to the Royal Pump-Room each morning at eight-thirty and imbibe twelve ounces of warm crescent saline and magnesia. It doesn't sound much, put that way, but I gather from contemporary accounts that it's practically equivalent to getting outside a couple of little old last year's eggs beaten up in sea-water. And the thought of Uncle George, who had oppressed me sorely in my childhood, sucking down that stuff and having to hop out of bed at eight-fifteen to do so was extremely grateful and comforting of a morning.

At four in the afternoon he would toddle down the hill again and repeat the process, and at night we would dine together and I would loll back in my chair, sipping my wine, and listen to him telling me what the stuff had tasted like. In many ways the ideal existence.

I generally managed to fit it in with my engagements to go down and watch him tackle his afternoon dose, for we Woosters are as fond of a laugh as anyone. And it was while I was enjoying the performance in the middle of the second week that I heard my name spoken. And there was Aunt Dahlia.

The next moment I was in a laurel bush, feeling like the cross which marks the spot where the accident occurred.

"Hullo!" I said. "What are you doing here?"

"I came down yesterday with Tom."

" Is Tom taking the cure ? " asked Uncle George, looking up hopefully from the hell-brew.

" Yes."

" Are you taking the cure ? "

" Yes."

" Ah ! " said Uncle George, looking happier than I had seen him for days. He swallowed the last drops, and then, the programme calling for a brisk walk before his massage, left us.

" I shouldn't have thought you would have been able to get away from the paper," I said. " I say," I went on, struck by a pleasing idea. " It hasn't bust up, has it ? "

" Bust up ? I should say not. A pal of mine is looking after it for me while I'm here. It's right on its feet now. Tom has given me a couple of thousand and says there's more if I want it, and I've been able to buy the serial rights of Lady Bablockhythe's ' Frank Recollections of a Long Life.' The hottest stuff, Bertie. Certain to double the circulation and send half the best-known people in London into hysterics for a year."

" Oh ! " I said. " Then you're pretty well fixed, what ? I mean, what with the Frank Recollections and that article of Mrs. Little's."

Aunt Dahlia was drinking something that smelled like a leak in the gas-pipe, and I thought for a moment that it was that that made her twist up a face. But I was wrong.

" Don't mention that woman to me, Bertie ! " she said. " One of the worst."

" But I thought you were rather pally."

" No longer. Will you credit it that she positively refuses to let me have that article——"

" What ! "

" ——purely and simply on account of some fancied grievance she thinks she has against me because her cook left her and came to me."

I couldn't follow this at all.

" Anatole left her? " I said. " But what about the parlourmaid ? "

" Pull yourself together, Bertie. You're babbling. What do you mean ? "

" Why, I understood——"

" I'll bet you never understood anything in your life." She laid down her empty glass. " Well, that's done ! " she said, with relief. " Thank goodness, I'll be able to watch Tom drinking his in a few minutes. It's the only thing that enables me to bear up. Poor old chap, he does hate it so ! But I cheer him by telling him it's going to put him in shape for Anatole's cooking. And that, Bertie, is something worth going into training for. A master of his art, that man. Sometimes I'm not altogether surprised that Mrs. Little made such a fuss when he went. But, really, you know, she ought not to mix sentiment with business. She has no right to refuse to let me have that article just because of a private difference. Well, she jolly well can't use it anywhere else, because it was my idea and I have witnesses to prove it. If she tries to sell it to another paper, I'll sue her. And, talking of sewers, it's high time Tom was here to drink his sulphur-water."

" But look here——"

" Oh, by the way, Bertie," said Aunt Dahlia, " I withdraw any harsh expressions I may have used about your man Jeeves. A most capable feller ! "

" Jeeves ? "

" Yes, he attended to the negotiations. And very well he did it, too. And he hasn't lost by it, you can bet. I saw to that. I'm grateful to him. Why, if Tom gives up a couple of thousand now, practically without a murmur, the imagination reels at what he'll do with Anatole cooking regularly for him. He'll be signing cheques in his sleep."

I got up. Aunt Dahlia pleaded with me to stick around and watch Uncle Tom in action, claiming it to be a sight nobody should miss, but I couldn't wait. I rushed up the hill, left a farewell note for Uncle George, and caught the next train for London.

" JEEVES," I said, when I had washed off the stains of travel, " tell me frankly all about it. Be as frank as Lady Bablockhythe."

" Sir ? "

" Never mind if you've not heard of her. Tell me how you worked this binge. The last I heard was that Anatole loved that parlourmaid—goodness knows why !—so much that he refused to leave her. Well, then ? "

" I was somewhat baffled for awhile, I must confess, sir. Then I was materially assisted by a fortunate discovery."

" What was that ? "

" I chanced to be chatting with Mrs. Travers's housemaid, sir, and, remembering that Mrs. Little was anxious to obtain a domestic of that description, I asked her if she would consent to leave Mrs. Travers and go at an advanced wage to Mrs. Little. To this she assented, and I saw Mrs. Little and arranged the matter."

" Well ? What was the fortunate discovery ? "

" That the girl, in a previous situation some little time back, had been a colleague of Anatole, sir. And Anatole, as is the too frequent practice of these Frenchmen, had made love to her. In fact, they were, so I understood it, sir, formally affianced until

Anatole disappeared one morning, leaving no address, and passed out of the poor girl's life. You will readily appreciate that this discovery simplified matters considerably. The girl no longer had any affection for Anatole, but the prospect of being under the same roof with two young persons, both of whom he had led to assume——"

"Great Scott! Yes, I see! It was rather like putting in a ferret to start a rabbit."

"The principle was much the same, sir. Anatole was out of the house and in Mrs. Travers's service within half an hour of the receipt of the information that the young person was about to arrive. A volatile man, sir. Like so many of these Frenchmen."

"Jeeves," I said, "this is genius of a high order."

"It is very good of you to say so, sir."

"What did Mr. Little say about it?"

"He appeared gratified, sir."

"To go into sordid figures, did he——"

"Yes, sir. Twenty pounds. Having been fortunate in his selections at Hurst Park on the previous Saturday."

"My aunt told me that she——"

"Yes, sir. Most generous. Twenty-five pounds."

"Good Lord, Jeeves! You've been coining the stuff!"

"I have added appreciably to my savings, yes, sir. Mrs. Little was good enough to present me with ten pounds for finding her such a satisfactory housemaid. And then there was Mr. Travers——"

"Uncle Thomas?"

"Yes, sir. He also behaved most handsomely, quite independently of Mrs. Travers. Another twenty-five pounds. And Mr. George Travers——"

"Don't tell me that Uncle George gave you something, too! What on earth for?"

"Well, really, sir, I do not quite understand myself. But I received a cheque for ten pounds from him. He seemed to be under the impression that I had been in some way responsible for your joining him at Harrogate, sir."

I gaped at the fellow.

"Well, everybody seems to be doing it," I said, "so I suppose I had better make the thing unanimous. Here's a fiver."

"Why, thank you, sir. This is extremely——"

"It won't seem much compared with these vast sums you've been acquiring."

"Oh, I assure you, sir."

"And I don't know why I'm giving it to you."

"No, sir."

"Still, there it is."

Aunt Dahlia was drinking something that smelled like a leak in the gas-pipe.

"Thank you very much, sir."

I got up.

"It's pretty late," I said, "but I think I'll dress and go out and have a bite somewhere. I feel like having a whirl of some kind after two weeks at Harrogate."

"Yes, sir. I will unpack your clothes."

"Oh, Jeeves," I said, "did Peabody and Simms send those soft silk shirts?"

"Yes, sir. I sent them back."

"Sent them back!"

"Yes, sir."

I eyed him for a moment. But I mean to say. I mean, what's the use?

"Oh, all right," I said. "Then lay out one of the gents' stiff-bosomed"

"Very good, sir," said Jeeves.

(Another story by P. G. Wodehouse next month.)

When I Was Young

A SERIES of ARTICLES by CELEBRITIES of TO-DAY describing HOW THEY VIEWED LIFE IN THEIR EARLY YEARS

Photo. Annan.

№ 5

G.K.CHESTERTON

THE very first sight that I ever remember seeing was a young man having on his head a large golden crown and carrying in his hand a large golden key. He was walking across a bridge that connected one castle tower with another; and it was borne in upon me that he was going to release a beautiful lady who was looking out of the window; she also wore a golden crown, which was obviously common in those parts. But her face in my memory is a blank. By a sort of vague inference or comparison, I know that there was somewhere or other yet a third character in a golden crown; and this character must have had a beard, because I remember noting with some sense of contrast that the young man with the key had only a moustache. If it be asked whether these sights be common in Kensington, where I was born, I am compelled to descend from the mountain of vision and say that (in the

dull dialect of maturity) these events took place inside a toy theatre. But I am thankful to say that I remember that scene as something earlier than any scene of daylight and the earth.

But even in the street outside there were remarkable things for the creative curiosity of childhood, which is too creative to be critical. There was a sham ruin covered with real ivy almost opposite the house, which was on Campden Hill. In the immediate neighbourhood was a house with a highly modern turret overhanging the fall of steep streets and bearing the rather too romantic name of Tower Crecy. High above it, high as the Tower of Babel to my childish eyes, and taking hold on heaven like a water-spout, rose the Tower of the Waterworks. It dominated my dreams so much that I afterwards tried to reproduce one of those pleasant nightmares in a novel called "The Napoleon of Notting Hill." At one turn of those steep roads above Kensington one could see a distant horizon and a sparkle like a star, which I was told bore the beautiful name of the Crystal Palace.

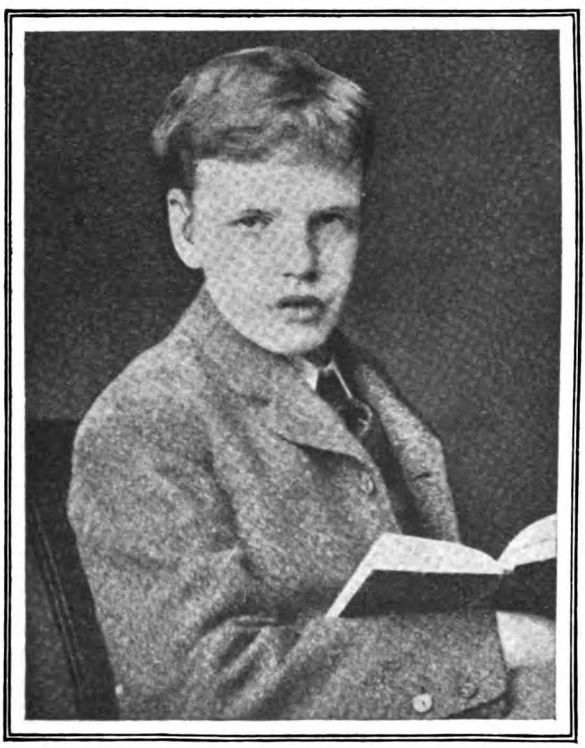
Age 6.
From a painting.

All those things, the toy stage, the sham ruin, the very modern turret with the very mediæval title, the Waterworks Tower, and the Crystal Palace, all had a certain character of being at once prosaic and poetical. They were Cockney, but they were not commonplace; and I have perhaps to thank them for an ingrained romanticism in my sentiments about vulgar things. Under the shadow of the Waterworks Tower there began to grow up in me something that I tried to express in the romance about it; the sense that one of these steep little streets might well be worth defending like a fortress; that even the little shops or respectable villas were not unworthy of a sort of local patriotism; and I began very early to feel something that resisted the contemporary trend of cosmopolitan imperialism. But I always felt that even this sacredness of the walled city needed, as it were, a vision from beyond the wall. One must be able also to see the Crystal Palace. I might add mournfully that I have seen the Crystal Palace since; but perhaps it is truer to say that I have never seen it again.

The great church of St. Mary Abbot's that dominates Church Street and Kensington High Street bulked very big in my childhood; and I heard a great deal about it, for it was, I think, the last great work of Gilbert Scott; and my father knew a great deal about the Gothic tradition and the Oxford Movement, as about many other things: for it was he who made the toy theatre, lighting candles that have never been put out. It was of this church that the tale was told that furious protests were aroused by a figure of the Virgin and Child above the porch. Apparently people made a highly English and constitutional compromise by taking away the Child. In other words (to a mediæval or merely logical mind) the Protestant people of Kensington were left with Mariolatry and nothing else. But I think there was a sort of vague feeling that She had been deprived of a dangerous weapon. Naturally my mind now goes back with a curious interest to these things; and not least to another church hidden away behind rows of great shops and approached by a crack of passage. For up this I once saw, when I was quite a child, something passing that was like a walking conflagration or an incarnate sunset; a huge trailing load of scarlet draperies, enclosing one old, ivory, wrinkled face, not to be forgotten; it was Manning. For the church was then called the Pro-Cathedral, and was used during the building of the great fane at Westminster.

With the name another memory returns which is something of a parable. I remember

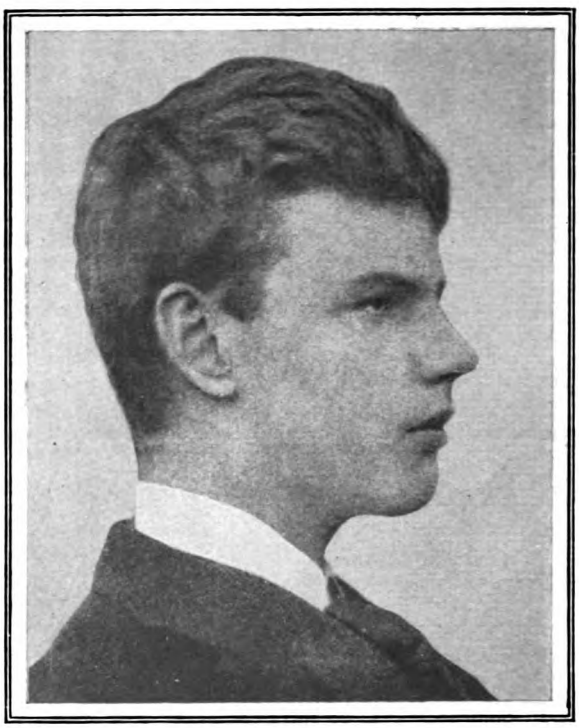
that we used to go to hear lectures and entertainments at some sort of bright and brisk semi-educational institution called the Progressive Hall. I do not call it semi-educational to insinuate that it inculcated semi-education. But it was full of the spirit of the time, in which even then I felt something vaguely unsatisfying. One evening somebody set out to go to a popular concert at the Progressive Hall, and found himself in one of those rich brown fogs that were a joy of my childhood in Kensington; and which were also perhaps something of a parable. He found a cab, but the cab failed to find the Progressive Hall. "And so," said the cabman, genially, in telling the story, "I took him to the Pro-Cathedral instead." The cabman apparently was moved rather by alliteration than by allegory. But there is something strangely allegoric in all stages of the story, including its conclusion. For the Progressive Hall, that heir of all the ages, that temple of the future, has long vanished from Kensington. I do not mean that the Progressive Hall has literally progressed, and passed on wheels from where its caravan had rested to some other camping-ground. I mean that it is forgotten; and perhaps nobody but myself has ever thought of mentioning it again. But the Pro-Cathedral is still there, and I was in it only last Christmas; but the name of it is Our Lady of Victories.



Age 13.

I have no intention now of discussing those victories. They belong to a later time of my life; yet these first glimpses and foreshadowings cannot but move me for a moment. The general atmosphere of my boyhood was emphatically what I may call a liberal atmosphere; indeed, it was liberal both with a large and with a small "L." I have no intention of going into political questions, excepting so far as they illustrate the conditions that I recall. But I really think that my own political and social tendencies were always touched with those first local impressions; of little London streets lifted up, as it were, upon something that seemed like the peak of a mountain. The Waterworks Tower still overshadowed me; and I had begun to imagine "The Napoleon of Notting Hill" while I was still going to school at St. Paul's School along the road to Hammersmith. I think I went through my schooldays in a sort of trance or sleep of sloth, dimly tracing those first fancies and refusing to put away childish things. Certainly, when I emerged into some sort of sense of citizenship, they still constituted my first comment on current affairs. I wrote that foolish romance about Notting Hill as a protest against the prevalent tendencies towards Imperialism and Internationalism; two tendencies which were then supposed to divide the world, but which seemed to me to unite it in one common lump of cosmopolitan dullness and vulgarity. Thus my politics from the first were strongly nationalist; and were expressed in a sympathy with the Irish over the first Home Rule Bill and afterwards in a sympathy with the Boers over the South African War. Party labels have since come to mean very little. But I can still say that if there is one thing in the world that I really know I am not, it is a Unionist. I do not believe now in the World's State of Mr. H. G. Wells any more than I believed then in the World Empire of Mr. Rudyard Kipling. In the latter controversy, in which I was what was called a Pro-Boer, I really began my journalistic career and (what is much more

important) made many of my best friends, including Mr. Belloc. I had indeed been unusually fortunate before that, in retaining the friendships of my schooldays more than do most men. Among them were E. C. Bentley, whose very universal brilliancy, familiar in private, is best known in public through the best detective story of our time; and Robert Vernède, who called in very noble verse upon the name of England, before he fell fighting for her in the Great War. But with the dispute about Boer nationalism there came, as I have said, a new group of friends to combine with these; and in the old *Speaker* we had the high exhilaration of being a minority defending normal and not abnormal things. For Belloc and Bentley and I were not pacifists and not what is commonly called internationalists. We were nationalists; and this sense of something sacred in what was accounted narrow is the most vivid memory of my first meditations. But there mingled with it a much larger question, far too large to discuss here. With this sense of a value in particular things there went a certain vividness of value. And, strangely enough, the trend of the time, which spread out to everything, yet ultimately pointed to nothing. The age of universalism in politics was the age of pessimism in philosophy. But I always believed in a more coloured vision inside a stricter frame; like the prince in the golden crown inside the frame of the paste-board theatre.



Age 15.

I went to an art school; having the presumptious hope of learning to illustrate books, before I fell back in despair upon the lighter task of writing them. For some reason I have never understood, there is nothing that is so definitely dated as art and art schools. Artists are almost the only people who are still so retrograde as to believe in progress. There is art and art criticism of a certain date as there are hats and bonnets of a certain date; they are taken as seriously so long as they are thought dressy; they are dismissed as lightly when they are thought dowdy. I should not find Latin taught at Oxford or logic taught at Cambridge very differently from the way in which they were taught in the last generation. But if I went back to an art school, I should probably find myself in a new world. I belonged to the period of the Impressionists; their sons had not yet grown up to be Post-Impressionists; just as their grandsons are only now preparing to appear as Post-Post-Impressionists. Impressionism was, I think, an expression of scepticism.

In teaching a man to paint his uncle as an arrangement in grey and purple, it insisted that these patches of tinted shade were all that we actually saw of an uncle; and to prove this the artists would screw up their eyes till they could see nothing at all. But underneath it was the old mad metaphysical question: "What do I know but sense impressions?" And that was why the age which talked of the art of Whistler also talked of the philosophy of Schopenhauer. The chief educational effect of most schools that I went to was to teach me to play truant. But towards this school in its intellectual sense I began to find myself in the uncomfortable position of a mutineer, rather than the more cheerful condition of a deserter. I began to argue with young artists because they were young pessimists. I found myself committed to the alarming task of defending the broad daylight and the breath of life. I had to do my best

with desperate paradoxes; and nerved myself to declare firmly that grass is green. Hence I was not content with the philosophy which dissolved the uncle into grey and purple; I felt the need of believing in an uncle of clearer outline and more vivid colour; an uncle really existing elsewhere than on the retina of the eye. I did not know how ancient were the disputes I stirred; or how in the depths of my muddled mind St. Bernard rose against Abelard. But I began to put my arguments into some sort of form; and when a friend and fellow-student, now Sir Ernest Hodder Williams, gave me some art books to review for *The Bookman*, I wrote down the arguments instead of reviewing the books.

That was the beginning of a long career of irrelevance; I became a writer, and however much we may all deplore it, it is too late to alter it now.

G. K. C. AS ARTIST.

A standard of respectability is still accepted by very different social types—

—but it is to be feared that it is accepted for very different reasons.

We understand from Mr. Chesterton that these sketches are from his monumental work, "A Sociological Enquiry Into the Function of Authority in Modern Morals"; in twenty-four volumes; very privately printed.

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They stood round the piano and
miracle to happen

The Baby Grand

WHEN the Gabril family first came to live in Camden Town, Gabril was not their name. They were reputed to have come from Silesia, and to have arrived with a name that was quite beyond the capabilities of the neighbourhood to pronounce. Some genius invented the name of Gabril for them, and it was probably a contraction of a more grandiose nomenclature. They were of Jewish stock, but had long ceased to practise or conform to any religious creed. It may almost be said that they had ceased to conform to any creed at all. They were a thoroughly unpleasant family. Solomon Gabril, the father, was a piano-tuner. He had been married twice and both his wives had died. By his first wife he had two sons and two daughters, Paul, Mischa, Selma, and Katie. By his second wife one daughter, Lena.

At the time when this story commences, Paul and Mischa were in the early twenties, Selma was eighteen, Katie seventeen, and Lena thirteen. They lived in three rooms and a scullery in a dingy house in Benthall Street. Solomon was a thoroughly competent piano-tuner, otherwise it is quite certain that the eminent firm of piano manufacturers in Kentish Town would not have tolerated him. He was dirty, untidy, wheezy, and vacillating. He indulged in drinking bouts, when nothing would be seen of him for days. When sober his manner was ingratiating and somewhat facetious. He had a perpetual sneering grin. He was,

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seemed to expect some astounding right away.

By STACY AUMONIER

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBEY

however, not entirely without feeling, and not entirely a fool. He was not capable of studied cruelty. He wished well towards his family, and would give them the best of everything if it hadn't been that there was barely enough for his own indulgences, and self came first. He paid the rent, allowed Selma, the eldest girl, a sufficient sum weekly to buy the bare necessities of life for the rest, and he never struck the children. It cannot be said that either of his sons had so good a character. Paul was frankly what is known as "a bad egg." He had been to prison twice for petty thefts. He never kept a situation for more than a few weeks. He was idle, depraved, and quarrelsome. Mischa was less objectionable than his brother. He was quieter, had never been convicted in crime, but was phlegmatic, morose, and stupid. He worked in a candle factory.

Selma was a narrow strip of a girl, with eyes too close together. She surreptitiously spent money meant for the food of the family on trinkets. She was supposed to manage the household, and to do the cooking and cleaning, and, during such time as she could spare from the local picture-house, she did make some sort of effort in this direction. She was furtive and selfish.

Katie, who did various odd jobs in tea-shops and private houses, was more like her brother Mischa. She was of the flaccid kind, and sighed her way through the dreary monotony of her days.

The whole family lived in a continuous

state of hunger and irritation, with the exception of Mr. Gabril, who was not particularly interested in eating, but who always managed to get a good dinner every day at a coffee-shop, and who drank sufficient beer both to feed himself and to keep in a static condition of oleaginous indifference to the troubles of others.

Being, as it were, engrafted on to this deplorable family tree, one may readily imagine that the conditions and prospects of the youngest child, Lena, were anything but roseate. She was quite obviously different from the rest. Her mother had been a singer, who died at Lena's birth. The child had a broad, plump face and dark-brown reflective eyes. She was curiously reserved, and she endured the insults and bullying of her sisters, and the cuffs of her elder brother, with almost uncanny fortitude, as though when all was said and done she was stronger than they, as though she had enduring treasures to defend.

She was sent to the local Church school, more with the idea of getting her out of the way, and keeping her out of mischief, than with benefiting her with the liberal education obtainable at that institution. Having bundled her off to school, the family's interest in her education and progress vanished. But it was instilled into her in early life that she was the only one who contributed nothing to the general upkeep of the house, and that the sooner she grew up and went out and earned her living the better it would be for her. She slept in one bedroom with the two stepsisters, the three men occupied the other, whilst the third room was dubbed facetiously "the parlour" by Mr. Gabril. It was the room where the whole family congregated, fed, quarrelled, and indulged in whatever recreations were available. It was furnished with a dilapidated sofa, four cane chairs, two packing-cases used as chairs, a deal table, a fitted cupboard, an oleograph of King Edward as an admiral, and several coloured plates taken from Christmas numbers. It had a smell of its own, in which fish, cabbage, smoke, drying clothes, and unwashed humanity mingled in degrees varying with the time of day and the state of the weather.

Lena was not allowed to sit on the sofa, which was usually occupied by the males, or in their absence the other two girls. She usually sat on a packing-case by the window, and there she would pore over her school books, trying to learn her lessons, amidst the general din, bickering, and disorder.

The family took no interest in her activities, other than those which affected themselves. On her part she formed outside friendships, and developed ambitions which she never imparted to the rest.

AND then one day a strange thing happened.

It was evening, and the family had just finished supper. The boys had gone out. Mr. Gabril was sprawling on the sofa, smoking and reading the evening paper. Selma was washing up in the scullery, Katie was making herself a blouse, and Lena was sitting on her packing-case, reading, when there came a knock at the door. Mr. Gabril said: "Come in!" and there entered a young, rather good-looking clergyman.

The surprise and consternation of the family was immense. The visit of a policeman could not have created a greater shock. Mr. Gabril started as though he expected to be accused of some dreadful vice. Katie dropped her sewing. Selma, catching sight of the visitor through the open door, swiftly wiped her hands on a dry rag and prepared to re-enter the room. Lena alone seemed unmoved. The stranger said, cheerily:—

"Mr. Gabril?"

"That's my name," said Mr. Gabril, suspiciously.

"Good evening, Mr. Gabril. My name is Winscombe, of the—er—Church schools. I wanted to have a word with you about your daughter. Ah! good evening, Lena!"

The mystery deepened. He nodded familiarly to Lena, who smiled a recognition. Now, what was this all about? The family had no particular use for clergymen, a cold, repressive, prying lot. At the same time, he was certainly a pleasant, gentlemanly fellow. There might be something to be got out of him. The grin returned to Mr. Gabril's face.

"Oh!" he said. "I didn't know. What's it about?"

Selma, who had entered the room and liked the appearance of the young man *qua* young man, had a brain-wave. She said:—

"Won't you sit down, sir?"

He bowed, and replied:—

"Thank you, thank you. Your other two daughters, I presume. Good evening! Good evening!"

He sat down and balanced his hat on his knee. Then he began speaking eagerly.

"Do you know, Mr. Gabril, we think your daughter has talent, decided talent. I expect you know she was introduced to my sister by Miss Watson at the school, who suspected her of being musical. My sister has been giving her lessons for the last year, and she is very impressed, very impressed indeed. My sister is not a great musician herself, and she is of opinion that Lena should go to someone more advanced."

"Well, the deuce! The nasty, furtive little cat! Why has she said nothing about

"Good evening, Mr. Gabril. My name is Winscombe, of the—er—Church schools. I wanted to have a word with you about your daughter."

this ?" reflected Mr. Gabril. Outwardly he continued to grin, and he spluttered out :—

"Eh ? Oh, yes ! Well, well !"

His mind became active. Plays the piano, eh ? Well, what did the fellow want ? Did he think that he, Solomon Gabril, was going to spend money on piano lessons ? Was he such a fool as that ? On the other hand, if she could play, perhaps there was money in it. Perhaps she could go on and play at the pictures. He'd heard of girls getting two or three pounds a week at the game. Well ? The young fellow continued to talk.

"It has all fallen out rather fortunately, I hope you'll agree. A friend of ours, a comparatively wealthy man, who is also a musical patron, introduced her to Soltz, the well-known professor. Lena played to him yesterday, and he too was impressed by her extreme promise. My friend is willing to pay for a course of lessons for her with Herr Soltz. I presume you would have no objection ?"

Something for nothing was entirely in keeping with Mr. Gabril's sense of social morality. But what about this ? In what way did *he* benefit ? It wanted thinking over. These people evidently had money. It would be much better if they gave the money to him, and *he* supervised the girl's musical education. On the other hand, if they taught her to play properly—well, there was money in that. Perhaps it would be better to agree in the meantime. He said :—

"Oh, really? Very nice, I'm sure—very nice."

The clergyman continued :—

"She will, of course, be leaving school shortly, and then, if she is allowed to devote her whole time to music, we think she may go far—very far indeed."

"Playing for the pictures?" said Mr. Gabril, tentatively.

"Oh, farther than that, I trust."

"Playing at concerts, and so on?"

"Why, yes, and giving her own recitals, and being engaged by orchestral societies, becoming a great artiste, in fact."

Mr. Gabril's eyes narrowed. He was a piano-tuner. He knew something about the profession. There were people like Paderewski and Pachmann making a lot of money. It had not occurred to him to associate his scrubby little daughter with the dazzling side of a musical career. He had not known till that moment that she knew a note of music. This was an historical day in the history of the Gabril family. But it had its reaction.

When the clergyman had gone, Selma flared up. She was jealous and furious. She went up to Lena and said :—

"You little sneak!" and she slapped her face. And then Mr. Gabril saw red. He grabbed Selma and screamed at her :—

"You fool! Leave her alone or I'll shake the life out of you!"

Selma cried, and Lena cried, and Katie joined in the general uproar, and eventually said she felt sick and was going to bed. Their individual emotions were at cross purposes. Selma couldn't see that her father was primarily concerned with the commercial potentialities of the situation. She accused him of taking Lena's side against her, who did all the work. *She* was only a drudge. *She* wasn't given piano lessons. Rich people didn't come chasing after *her*. A nice thing it was. She supposed Lena would be having dancing lessons next, and be going to Buckingham Palace to be presented at Court. Selma was very hysterical, her mind a little confused by a film she had seen that afternoon, called "The Heir to Millions." It was a thoroughly unpleasant evening, and was not improved by the late advent of the two brothers, both rather drunk. They were too drunk to be impressed by the news about the clergyman's visit. Paul laughed boisterously.

"A parson, eh?" he kept on repeating. "Fancy a parson coming 'ere!" He seemed to think it was quite the funniest thing that had ever happened.

For several weeks Lena was subjected to a running fire of jeering comments, vindictive on the part of her stepsisters, ironic and inane on the part of the brothers. It was only Mr. Gabril himself who displayed any kind of tolerance. He cannot be said to have shown any great sympathy, but he licked his lips and leered, and bade the others shut up. He told romantic stories of vast fortunes made out of playing the piano. None of the others believed him. It was a dream so outside their normal conception of life as lived in Camden Town that they could not visualize it. It was possible that romantic figures in other settings did such things, but scrubby little Lena, with whose superfluous person they had been herded day and night all her wretched life—nonsense!

THE only note of reality was struck three weeks after the clergyman's visit, for one day a piano arrived. It was what is known as a baby grand and was put in "the parlour." Now this was a concrete and astonishing occurrence. A piano costs money. Amidst the packing-cases and flimsy furniture of the Gabrils' parlour it struck a flamboyant, an alarming note. If it had been an ordinary upright piano it would not have seemed so out of place, but a Grand! Even Paul was slightly awed, and Selma disagreeably impressed. It seemed to take up all the room, to be insolently assertive. Its contempt for the flimsy furniture oozed from its shiny black sides. It was like a large Persian cat of ancient pedigree finding itself in a room full of scraggy, ill-born kittens.

Mr. Gabril chuckled with satisfaction. He ran his fingers over the keys, playing the few florid harmonies he was accustomed to indulge in on his tuning rounds. It was a magnificent piano. The angle of the family's attitude towards Lena shifted a little. What if there were something in it after all? Each one naturally thought of his or her own interests. "Suppose she does make money, where do I come in?"

They stood round the piano in a group and made her play. They seemed to expect some astounding miracle to happen right away. They wanted her to give some definite proof that gold would quickly flow as a result of her exertions. They were disappointed. She certainly seemed to play all right. But she played very dull pieces. There was nothing about the performance to dazzle or surprise.

Nevertheless they granted her a certain amount of freedom. She was allowed to practise for several weeks unmolested, until the novelty of the situation began to wear off. They got tired of her scales, arpeggios, and repetitions. Besides, nothing was being said about paying her large sums for playing in public. Paul wouldn't let her play at all when he was in the house. Mischa brought home a young man

friend who banged out jazz tunes for two evenings running. Selma began to find the piano useful for piling up plates, and pans, and pots. In three months' time the piano had ceased to be an object of awe. Respect for it vanished. It became part and parcel of the room. Its lid was scratched and marked. It was piled up with papers and plates and odd rubbish. Lena only practised when the others were out, and then she was always being interrupted by knocks at the door, barrel organs in the street below, or the irksome duty of having to keep one eye on a boiling pot.

Twice a week she went over to Kensington and had a lesson from Mr. Soltz. As her father refused to give her any money she had to walk there and back, always hungry, frequently exhausted, ill-shod, shabbily dressed, rain-soaked. But her eyes continued to glow with the fire of her prescribed purposes, and a smile was ever ready on her lips.

A WHOLE year passed before the deplorable incident in connection with the piano happened.

Lena had left school. She was over fifteen. It was pointed out to Mr. Gabril very forcibly by the other members of the family that she might now be out earning money. There was no sign yet that all this piano-playing was going to be any good. She might go on doing it for years, and who was going to keep her? Why should she be allowed to idle about at home, strumming on a piano, when Katie had to go off every morning to a tea-shop?

Paul was out of a job, and Selma had become engaged to a flashy young man who served in a stores and backed horses. She wanted to get married, and of course they had no money to start housekeeping on. That fact was probably the basis of the idea which led to the regrettable incident, that and Paul's unemployment and depravity. It is certain that at the height of this condition of discontent and disorder Paul and Selma put their heads together. They were both desperate and without moral bias. They plotted a devilish dishonesty. One day, when everyone was out except these two, a gentleman in a bowler hat paid them a visit. He made a careful examination of the piano, and the three of them whispered together in a corner.

On the following Thursday afternoon Lena was over at Kensington, having a lesson, Mr. Gabril was out tuning, and Katie was, of course, at business also. A van drove up. Four men in green aprons came upstairs. They picked up the "baby" as though it really were a baby. They carried it gently downstairs and deposited it in the van. The foreman handed Paul an envelope and they drove off. Paul and Selma had sold the piano for seventy pounds!

The plot was ingenious but somewhat incomplete. They had taken the precaution to deal with a firm in South London, and payment was made in cash. It was obvious that they must not disappear. They must brazen the thing out. Selma was to say that she was alone in the house when the piano people called and said they had instructions to take the piano away and restore it. She knew nothing about it. She supposed it was all right. Nevertheless, it was a risky game. It all depended upon what attitude Mr. Winscombe's people might take. They might advertise. Paul and Selma would have to stick together and lie like anything. They shared the spoil, but both felt dreadfully frightened. And, curiously enough, Selma felt less frightened of detection than she did of Lena. What would Lena do? There was something queer and uncanny about the kid. You never knew what she would do.

It was unfortunate for Paul that the transaction was a cash one. He went out into the street with thirty-five pounds in his pocket. He was not a good subject to have so much money on him. He had never had so much before in his life. He was frightened and very desperate. He went straight down the road and had three whiskies. Then he began to see things more clearly. There would be a row. He might be arrested, put in prison—anything. What did he care about the family? Thirty-five pounds seemed an enormous sum. He could live for months, and then perhaps something else might turn up, another scoop. He wasn't going back to that house. Of course he had promised to stick by Selma, but still—what did it matter? Selma could look after herself. Women were always all right. Let's have a good night-out first anyway. He went up West.

After an orgy which lasted three days and nights he took a train to Brighton, where in the fullness of time he married a fat elderly lady who owned a greengrocer's shop. His subsequent life does not concern us, but, if rumour is to be believed, he got all he deserved.

Selma was pluckier than Paul, and a little more cunning. To her surprise, Lena took the news more philosophically than she had expected. At first, of course, she believed Selma's story that they had sent for the piano to do something to it, but even when the truth came out, that it had indeed been stolen, she only seemed a little dazed and surprised. It was as though there were within her vibrant forces that could not be

deflected by the mere removal of material things.

It was Mr. Gabril who caused Selma most trouble. He was furious. He saw at once that some trick had been played, and he regarded the playing of tricks as his own prerogative. He had, indeed, for some time nurtured this identical idea of selling the piano, and he would have done it more efficiently. He had many friends in the piano-dealing world, friends who were capable of keeping their mouths shut, too. He would have got a good price, and he did not believe there was anything in Lena's future, or, if there were, it would take too long to materialize.

When Paul failed to return the father's suspicions naturally centred upon him. He accepted Selma's statement unquestioningly. Well, what were they going to do? Selma hinted at keeping the matter quiet.

"The piano was only lent. They will hold us responsible," she said.

"Idiot!" yelled the father. "What's the good of that? They're bound to find out in time. Besides, I'm going to find out who did this dirty trick. I'm going to have my revenge."

"Suppose it was Paul?" said Selma, turning rather pale.

"If it was Paul he can go to jail for it. He's been there before. It's about the only place he's fit for," said the boy's father.

Selma cursed her brother in her heart. The coward! The sneak! Fancy running away, leaving her to bear the brunt of the whole danger! How like a man!

Lena was only concerned with the question as to where she was to practise, and on what piano. She went the first thing next morning and reported the matter to Mr. Winscombe. That gentleman arrived later with a lawyer. Selma was closely cross-examined. She gave her version of the case, only omitting the fact of Paul's disappearance.

Later in the day Mr. Winscombe had an interview with Sir Robert Ashington, the music patron and owner of the piano. He was a thin, scholarly-looking old gentleman with snow-white hair.

"Well, well," he said, on hearing the clergyman's report, "what are we to do about it?"

"We have already notified the police, and Channing suggests that we might advertise it. If the firm who bought the piano are a *bonâ-fide* firm they might be willing to come forward. But if, as is most likely, they got it for a song they may keep quiet. It is easy enough to sell a grand piano, and comparatively easy to alter the number or change it in such a manner that after a little interval they could dispose of it with safety."

"Do you suspect the family?"

The clergyman shrugged his shoulders.

"They are a terrible crowd, sir, terrible. They are certainly capable, either individually or collectively, of doing such a thing. The father, of course, is the most likely. He is in the piano trade, and would know how to go to work."

"What about the child?"

Mr. Winscombe smiled.

"She is splendid. She came to me this morning, and there were tears in her eyes. 'Oh, Mr. Winscombe,' she said, 'don't tell me this is the end! I shall go mad if I cannot go on playing!'"

There was a certain humidity about the eyes of the older man.

"Poor child!" he said. "Well, well, let us fix her up first. She had better have a room in some respectable house we know of. I daresay we can find her another piano. I saw Soltz two days ago. He says she is making astonishing strides."

THE REV. MR. WINSCOMBE got busy. He had no room available in his own house, but after a rapid search he made arrangements with an American widow, who lived with her son and daughter in a large house in Regent's Park. Her name was Mrs. Bouverie Bonnington. She was a warm-hearted, sympathetic woman, interested in social questions, clever and well-read. She had a music-room and a grand piano which was seldom used in the daytime. Her son was at college, and her daughter was not musical. She gave Lena permission to go there and play whenever she liked.

An advertisement was put in the papers, but no reply was received. Neither were the police ever able to solve the mystery of the vanished baby grand. After a week or two Selma breathed more freely, but she was still frightened and entirely discontented with her lot. She suffered from sleeplessness, and nightmares in which giants in green baize aprons played pitch and toss with enormous grand pianos that were for ever about to drop on her head. She determined to marry her flashy young shop-assistant at the earliest possible moment. She told him she had saved thirty-five pounds out of her housekeeping money, and he, immediately inspired by the thoughts of this noble endowment, conceived a great scheme by which it could be trebled by a cunning system of backing outsiders for small sums. Selma had no great faith in this, but after considerable discussion she advanced him ten pounds to experiment with. Unfortunately for Selma's future life, the investment was surprisingly successful. It happened during the ensuing month that several most unlikely outsiders romped home

to a place. The ten pounds accrued to forty-seven pounds, and they got married and went to live in rooms at Holloway. Selma's half-share of the piano bought her married life—so she also got her deserts.

Her departure was the beginning of the slow disintegration of the whole Gabril family. Mischa went out to Canada, and they did not hear from him again. Katie wanted to come home and take Selma's place, but Mr. Gabril could not see that there was any point in that. She was making good money; let her stop where she was. The rooms could look after themselves. The three of them pigged along as best they could.

A WHOLE year went by. A year and eight months, and then Katie was taken suddenly ill. She had to go to a hospital and have an operation. It was not a serious operation, but in her anæmic and enfeebled condition it proved too much for her. She died under the anæsthetic.

Mr. Gabril was now running rapidly to seed. The firm still employed him, but he was entrusted with less and less orders. His income became automatically less. He began to regard Lena restlessly. It was quite time she was making money—all this talk about a great career! He had been gambling on it, perhaps foolishly. She might be earning a pound a week or so at some honest job. He went to see Mr. Winscombe and explained.

"My dear sir," said that gentleman, "your daughter is getting on splendidly. Everyone is delighted with her. They say she will be a great artiste. But she must have time. It would be cruel to take her away now."

"How much time?"

"At least another two years. She might give lessons before then."

Two years! And he had got to keep her all that time? Oh, no, the game wasn't worth it. He growled an incoherent disapproval, borrowed five shillings from the clergyman, and came away. Something would have to be done. That evening he took Lena severely to task.

"Now, look here," he said, "that parson said you could give lessons. You'd better get busy and find some pupils. If you don't get pupils within the next week I shall take you away and put you in a job."

It happened that evening that Selma called with her husband. She seemed querulous and tearful. The betting system had been a complete failure since their marriage, and she was going to have a baby. What were they going to do? Things were bad enough as it was. How could they afford a child as well? And George was in debt up to his eyes: George did not give the impression of being in debt. He was well clothed and groomed and his silver cigarette-case was always flashing. He laughed indulgently at his wife. All would be well when the flat-racing season started. He had had some very sound information straight out of the horse's nose-bag.

"When are you going to start making all this money?" Selma suddenly asked Lena.

"What money, Selma?"

Even Mr. Gabril was aghast at this flippant reply. Money! What did the girl think she was doing all this ivory thumping for? Fun? Pleasure? As a matter of fact Lena had given the subject little thought. She had at times dreamed that she might one day be rich, and then she would like to go about helping people, even her own people, even Selma. But she did not associate the surging calls of her muse with making money. It was so much bigger and beyond that, so much more tremendous. Of course she wanted to do her duty. She didn't want to be mean, but she knew that in this social struggle she was born to she had to fight her own battles.

"Perhaps I can get some pupils," she said, defensively.

During the next few days she did look round and make inquiries. But pupils were not at all easy to secure. No one had heard of Lena Gabril. She looked too young to have the authority of a teacher. She consulted Mr. Winscombe, and in the end, on his recommendation, a lady in the Camden Road engaged her to teach her two little girls. She was to be paid thirty shillings a term for giving the little girls twelve lessons each.

She broke the news to her father with triumph, but to her chagrin he received it angrily.

"Thirty shillings!" he whined. "What's the good of thirty shillings? You ought to be earning thirty pounds a term."

Thirty pounds! Oh, dear! That would mean teaching forty little girls twelve hours each a term. Four hundred and eighty hours out of the term. When was she to practise? She would have to be cunning with her father, humour him, pretend she was trying to get more and more pupils. The terrible menace of a "job" hung over her. She imagined herself in a pickle factory or a draper's shop, or perhaps out at service. The reflection drove her to work harder and harder at her piano. She said nothing about the kindness Mrs. Bonnington was showing her. She pretended she just went to a house, practised in a room, and came away without seeing anyone. She dreaded that her father

might call, make a scene, borrow money, and behave in some disgraceful fashion. Some profound instinct of self-preservation prompted her to remain mute concerning the delightful lunches and teas and talks she had with Mrs. Bonnington and her son and daughter. She had discovered a new world, a world she had only been able dimly to imagine through the medium of music. She was emerging through the dark mists of her upbringing into a realm of light and understanding. She did not mean her father and stepsister to drag her back without a bitter struggle.

Two months passed before the climacteric was reached. She had not been able to get any more pupils. Her father got more and more vindictive, bitter, and inclined to violence. Mr. Gabril had been on one of his periodic orgies. He arrived home one evening, his eyes bloodshot and his breath whisky-laden. He had spent all his money and he wanted more. Lena, of course, had none.

"Go and get some," he roared.

"Where can I get any money?" she asked.

"You lazy little slut!" he screamed, in a higher pitch. "Thirty shillings a term you earn, do you? I've been keeping you for seventeen years. To-morrow you'll come along with me. I'll get you a job with a pal of mine who runs a public-house. That's what I'll do. He said he'd give you a job—barmaid, see? In Kentish Town. You'll like it. A nice merry life, plenty of boys and booze, see? Now, you go right along to that woman in the Camden Road and collect the thirty bob she owes you, and bring it back to me at once. Go on, hurry up!"

"I couldn't do that," said Lena, colouring up. "I couldn't call there in the evening like this and ask for money."

"Now, look here. That parson said you could give lessons. If you don't get pupils within the next week I shall put you in a job."

"Oh, you couldn't, couldn't yer?" said Mr. Gabril. "You couldn't do what yer father tells yer, couldn't yer? Take that!"

And he struck at her. Lena was expecting this. She put up her arm and parried the blow. She cowered against the wall. Her eyes narrowed. She said, quietly:—

"All right. I'll go."

She put on her hat and cloak, tidied her hair in the broken mirror, and went slowly out. After she had gone Mr. Gabril felt ill. His heart was behaving queerly. He flopped on to the sofa and lay down.

"I want a drink," he kept on repeating, "that's what's the matter with me—hope she'll be quick. I want a drink."

He waited some time till a drowsiness crept over him, and then he sank into a drunken sleep. He was next conscious of cold, discomfort, and wretchedness. He struggled through the coma to find himself. When consciousness came it seemed only partial. Where was he? What had happened? It was raw daylight, and he was lying on the sofa in "the parlour." Why, yes, of course, he had had a bit of a binge. But why was he here? Where was Lena? Lena! Why, yes, something had happened. Bit of a row, eh? He remembered now he had sent her out to get some money. Where was she? He called out:—

"Lena!"

There was no answer. He got up and stumbled to the girl's bedroom. She was not there. Where the devil was she? He visited each room in turn, and wandered out on to the staircase. It was broad daylight, must be nearly midday, and she had gone out last night. What had happened to her? Accident? Perhaps she'd jumped into the canal because he'd struck her. Girls were like that, silly, hysterical creatures. But Lena wasn't exactly the sort. But what was he to do? He felt ill, and he had no money. He crawled back to the sofa.

He lay there for hours in a kind of torpor, hoping that Lena would return at any moment. There was a little food in the house, but he felt too unwell to eat. Once he worked himself up into a violent fit of rage. He swore and blasphemed loudly, but finding this only made him feel worse, he desisted. When the room began to get dark again he became desperate. He scribbled a note to Selma, telling her to come and see him at once. He got a boy on the floor below to take it, on a promise of sixpence. Then he waited in the increasing gloom.

It was three hours before Selma came. She came alone. He cursed her for being so long, and she lost her temper. When she heard of Lena's disappearance, her expression became blacker still. When her father suggested accident or suicide she cried out, savagely:—

"Not she, you fool! That's not her luck. I felt it from the first. She's gone to her rich friends."

"Where do they live?"

"I don't know. Somewhere in Regent's Park. I've never been there. I don't know their name."

"I'll make the devils pay for this. How can we find them?"

"Mr. Winscombe would know."

"That's right, curse him! You go round now and find out. Got any money, Selma? If so, for God's sake get me a drink first."

"I haven't any money for drinks for you, but I'll go round to Mr. Winscombe."

Mr. Gabril growled, and Selma went out. She felt tired herself, but there was a sense of grim satisfaction in being able to hand her stepsister over to the father's vengeance. Mr. Winscombe was out, but he was expected in. He kept her waiting half an hour. When he arrived he said that he knew nothing about Lena's disappearance. He had not seen Mrs. Bonnington for weeks. However, he reluctantly gave Selma the name and address.

Armed with this weapon of vengeance, Selma returned to her father. She found him lying face downwards by the fireplace.

She gave a feeble scream when she felt his stiff body. Then she stood up and looked around her. The instinct of self-preservation was fortified by her condition. She had no love for her father. She looked at the sticks of furniture and reflected. She knew her father had no money. But there were three rooms furnished in a way. The whole lot would fetch several pounds. There was an unborn child to consider, and the flat-racing season was not being any good. Who should have this furniture if not she?

She looked at the crumpled paper in her hand—Lena's address. What should she do about that? If Lena had gone to live with these people, she couldn't prevent her. She was a little frightened of educated people—indeed, a little frightened of Lena herself. Besides, if she returned she might claim her share of the furniture. She flung the paper in the fireplace. Let Lena go her own way. Let her rot.

ONE spring morning seven years later Selma was walking down Great Portland Street. Her right hand was holding the hand of a chubby little girl of four. Under her left arm was a bundle of washing. She took that narrow turning that runs by the side of the Queen's Hall. Suddenly her eye alighted

Selma did not know how to act. She let go of the child's hand and shifted the bundle from one arm to the other, as though anxious to conceal it.

upon the lithograph of a portrait that seemed familiar. Underneath the portrait in large black type was printed "Lena Gabrielski," and then in red type, "First appearance since her brilliantly successful American tour." Hardly had she recovered from her astonishment at recognizing Lena's portrait when a figure came down the steps from the artistes' door. It was Lena herself. The two women looked straight into each other's eyes. Lena was the first to speak.

"Selma!" she gasped.

Selma was entirely nonplussed. She did not know how to act. She let go of the child's hand and shifted the bundle from one arm to the other, as though anxious to conceal it. She looked from Lena to the poster, and said at random :—

"Why do you call yourself that funny long name?"

Lena glanced at the poster.

"Oh, that was my agent's idea. How are you, Selma, and who is this small person?"

"It's my little girl."

Lena stooped and took the child's hand.

"And what is your name?"

The child's eyes kindled at the vision of this beautiful lady so beautifully gowned. She said, "Irene."

Selma stood apart, consumed with the consciousness of jarring contrast. Her own slatternliness, her bundle, her baby, and this other woman with the clothes, manner, and faint perfume of the well-bred. Could it be possible that they had the same father? She felt angry. A tear came into her eye, and she groped for the child's hand as though anxious to escape. But the child was apparently too occupied to notice her mother's anxiety. She appeared to have suddenly made a new friend. When Lena had finished her little talk she turned to Selma and said :—

"Selma, I tried to find you once or twice, but you had moved and no one knew your address. Why didn't you write to me?"

Selma didn't know what prompted her to do it, but she felt an abrupt desire to hurt Lena, to hurt herself even more. She said, bitterly :—

"Do you know it was me and Paul that stole your piano? We sold it and shared the spoil."

Lena gave a little gasp. It was her turn to cry, but a smile struggled through her tears. She pressed her stepsister's arm.

"Never mind, Selma. You did me a great service. If you had not taken the piano, I should never perhaps have met my—my husband. And we are so happy, Selma."

"You—married!"

"Yes. I married Mrs. Bonnington's son. We live at Hampstead. Won't you come and see us? I have babies of my own. I'd like to help you, Selma."

For a moment the elder woman wavered. She dug her hard fingers tighter into the bundle of washing. Then she said :—

"Oh, what's the good?"

A policeman at the corner watched the two women interestedly. Their behaviour struck him as peculiar. Was the woman with the bundle and the baby trying to beg? It didn't seem quite like it. In fact, it looked almost the other way about. The child, too, seemed to be taking an important part in the discussion and was appealing to its mother. Was there going to be a scene? He strolled at the law's pace in their direction. Before he reached them, however, he saw the lady hail a taxi. The three of them entered it, and drove off in the direction of Hampstead.

"Um!" he muttered to himself. "Rum creatures—women!"

"CONFESSIONS OF A HUMORIST,"

by

JEROME K. JEROME.

Next month will appear the first of a delightful series of articles by the famous author of "Three Men in a Boat" and "The Passing of the Third-Floor Back"—each a classic in its field—in which he will relate in his most characteristic and amusing style his experiences as author, editor, lecturer, and dramatist.

EAGLES ON BEN GARRA

By

GEORGE BLAKE

ILLUSTRATED BY W.R.S. STOTT

I.

THE old man shook his head, as old men are wont to do when youth questions their dear beliefs.

"No, no, Mr. Ian. Eagles on Ben Garra—Duncans in Dunsyre. That's been the way of it since the Forty-Five, aye, and long before that. Eagles on Ben Garra—Duncans in Dunsyre! Ye needna' tell me that there's any other way of it."

Ian Duncan smiled gently at the old gillie's grim faith in the traditional saying.

"Ye may laugh, Mr. Ian," cried old Donald, "but that's the way of it. Look!"

He pointed a knotty forefinger up the sunlit glen. Above the blue peak that limited their view, two restless dots against the morning sky swooped and circled and rose again and swooped once more. The golden eagles of Ben Garra were saluting the sun.

"There ye are! There ye are!" nagged the old man, clinching his argument. "Eagles on Ben Garra! Ye needna' tell me, Mr. Ian, that there'll no' be Duncans in Dunsyre so long as the *iolair* nests up there."

"Very well, Donald," said Ian Duncan; "we can only hope for the best."

Saying which, he turned away abruptly; and, as he turned away, he knew that he had no hope at all. Dunsyre must go. The shooting-tenant, Small, already in the Castle, had put in his offer for the place, lock, stock, and barrel. A handsome offer—he would have to accept it. Dunsyre must go, as scores of hereditary Highland homes had gone, to some new-rich sportsman of the south—to this Small; Small of Birmingham, enriched by the war—all because mortgages and taxes made a burden that could be borne no longer.

Ian Duncan looked about him. The dear smells of brier and bog myrtle were in his

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nostrils. He saw the little wood in which he and his brother Hugh had played the great games of boyhood. Seven generations of Duncans had lived here—and now to sign it away! Well, the debts would be paid; they would leave Dunsyre intact, and the sheet would be clean.

He turned hastily from the lovely scene, and walked quickly along a track that brought him in sight of the sea and led him over a spur of a hill, until he had beneath him the blue slate roof of a house among the trees of another glen. He walked quickly, like a man who hastens to have an unpleasant task over and done with.

It is not often that a man goes thus to meet his sweetheart. But Anna Mentieth must be told the news at once; and told more than that. He hurried on.

She was waiting for him where they always met, by the stepping-stones across the brown burn that separated the estate of Dunsyre from that of Scarbreck, the land of Anna's father. The sweetness of her slim white form, slipping through the bracken to meet him, made his heart beat faster. And the sun pierced the foliage overhead to glorify her crown of corn-gold hair.

"Ian!" she called, gladly.

He stepped over the stones to greet her. The smile died from her blue eyes at the sight of his grave face.

"But, Ian——" she said. "Old boy—is it—what we were frightened of?"

"Yes, Anna," he answered softly, and longed to kiss her bright, soft hair. She was playing with a horn button on his tweed jacket—like a dear hurt child.

"Not that hideous Mr. Small?"

"Yes. That hideous Mr. Small."

A bitter little laugh was wrung from him.

"Sold, Anna. I'll have to accept—I'll have to sell. Dunsyre is finished with the Duncans—for all the eagles on Ben Garra. And that's the end of that story."

He found himself looking down on her bent head. That dear, dear head with its waves of gold, so soft and sweet. He had, by an effort of will, to take his eyes from its seduction. He had no right now, no right now.

"It's all arranged—practically," he said; "we shall have to leave almost at once, if I can force myself to sign. And I must."

It was difficult to pronounce sentence of doom on their love, but, according to his code, it had to be done. He spoke quietly but steadily.

"There's not much to arrange, after all. Small buys everything—lock, stock, and barrel. We just walk out and go——"

"Where?" came her whisper.

"Oh, anywhere. No, as a matter of fact, Anna, it's that I've got to tell you about. It's dear old Hugh's scheme. You know that he has been mining in South Africa. Well, the idea is that I should go back with him and start a sort of ranch out there—with the salvage. It's a fine country, you know, and there are chances, and I think I can make something of it. I *must* make something of it. Make a decent living, at least, and a sort of home. I'll work like a nigger, and——"

His sentence tailed off. To have to condemn a girl like this, warn her off, tell her that she could not share his life! Pity for her overwhelmed him. There was a catch in his voice when he spoke again.

"Perhaps some day, Anna—not so very long—I'll come back to have a look—at the old place and——"

And now she was sobbing frankly in his arms. He held her gently, and his eyes brooded on the glory of her hair.

"Oh, Ian——" she wailed.

Then, suddenly, her sobbing ceased, and she looked up with a smile struggling through her tears.

"Sorry, Ian. I'm a fool. Ever so sorry, old man. It won't happen again."

She was rising finely to her difficult occasion. Her fragment of handkerchief fluttered for a moment at her eyes.

"There we are," she said, brightly. "We mustn't make fools of ourselves, must we, Ian? Come, old man, take me over to lunch at the Dower House. I feel that I could rag old Hugh—if I try hard."

She stepped daintily to the first of the stones and held out her little white hand for him to take.

II.

GLEN GARRA had been beautiful in the morning sunlight, so beautiful that Ian Duncan could hardly bear to look at the smiling strath he was to sign away. But sunlight is fickle and fleeting in the Western Highlands. After noon that day there came over the sky a shroud of grey. Along the hillsides, like smoke rolling from a mountain fire, came the mist of the west country. Ben Garra passed out of view, and the trees receded into the pall. A smirr of fine rain began to fall.

It was Hugh Duncan, of the luncheon party of three, who sought to be cheerful.

"After all," he asked, grinning at Anna out of his freckled face, "who wouldn't leave Dunsyre on a day like this?"

The other two smiled wanly at his trifling jest. All very well for Hugh—he had taken leave of Dunsyre ten years ago and made his life in South Africa. But Hugh was persistent in humour.

"Eagles on Ben Garra, by Jove! Who would be an eagle on Ben Garra to-day?"

Anna started a little, then looked away at a portrait on the wall. Ian Duncan knocked the ash from his cigarette with an over-emphasized snap of the fingers.

"Oh, chuck it, Hugh," he said, curtly. "It's not quite such a joke as all that."

Hugh's blue eyes, wide in a boyish face, stared at his brother, then at Anna.

"You are a precious pair, I must say. And I was only trying to cheer you up. 'Pon my Sam, blessed if I won't go across and play a hand at picquet with old Ferguson."

He threw a spent match at Anna.

"Cheer up, my child. Or, I say"—his innocent smile beamed at them—"what if I go and get Ferguson to make a four at bridge?"

"Oh, hang bridge!" said Ian, violently.

"No takers," remarked Hugh, cheerfully. He stretched his arms. "Oh, lor'! What a day! Won't somebody come and break the strain before I scream the house down?"

HE rose and strolled to the window and, standing there, looked out at the banks of mist rolling down the glen. His tuneless whistle filled the room. Then his voice startled his companions.

"Hullo!" he cried. "Blowed if somebody isn't coming! At the double, too. Wait! Good heavens, it's old Donald! I haven't seen him run for fifteen years. Wonder what he wants?"

Hugh opened one of the French windows at which he stood. A minute later the old gillie was panting up the steps.

"Mr. Ian! Mr. Ian!" he was crying.

"Well, what is it?" asked Ian, rising.

"That Sassenach devil——"

"Who do you mean? Mr. Small?"

"The same. Oh, Mr. Ian, do you ken what he's after this day? It was the shepherd from Anchnaglass told me. It's the eagles he's after, him and his gun. That's why he went so quiet this morning and no' a gillie with him. The Sassenach devil! Shooting eagles! Did you ever hear the like o' that? And the eagles on Ben Garra——"

The old man stopped, gasping. Haste and emotion had exhausted him. And for a moment Ian Duncan could find nothing to say. It was Hugh who cut in.

"The low blighter! I hope he gets his jolly old eyes scratched out."

"Indeed he will, indeed he will!" Old Donald began to rave vehemently.

"That'll do, Donald," Ian interrupted him. "Run down and ask Mr. Ferguson to step up here for a minute."

The old man touched his cap and shambled away. Hugh Duncan was staring at his brother.

"But look here, Ian——"

"Well?"

"Aren't you going to stop it—go up and stop the beggar? Heavens alive, one doesn't shoot golden eagles. They're protected by law. And these are—well, they're our eagles, in a way. And you're prepared to sit here and do nothing!"

Hugh's young indignation was so fierce that Ian had to smile at him.

"My dear Hugh," he said, quietly, "you've missed the point. Small won't shoot the eagles. He's not fit to do it. It's more likely that the eagles will kill him. And just oblige me by looking at that mist. Do you quite realize that Small and his boy may be lying on the top of Ben Garra?"

He looked at his brother; then his impatience burst out.

"Oh, my God! The thing's serious. Ben Garra—in a mist like this! Run and get oilskins. We've got to go and look for them at once. Quick! Oilskins and sticks—and a gun!"

As Hugh ran from the room, Ferguson, the factor, appeared at the window.

"You've heard Duncan's story?" Ian turned on him.

"I've just come from the Castle. It looks bad, Mr. Ian," said Ferguson. "And they're not back yet," he added, gravely.

"It's about as bad as it could be," retorted Ian, violently. "Come on, we've got to go and look for them. They'll break their necks over some precipice, if the eagles haven't half-killed them. Are you ready, man? It'll be as black as pitch in two hours. Hugh!"

"Coming!"

Into the room with his arms laden staggered Hugh. In a trice they were ready for the mountain road.

"Come on, Ferguson," cried Hugh, and hurried out.

"Ian!"

It was Anna's quiet voice at his elbow.

"Ian, can't I come with you?" she pleaded.

"To Ben Garra—on a day like this!"

"You know I'm as strong as you are, Ian, dear—listen." Her voice pleaded with him. "We're not going to have many days together. And I ll be so good. Really, Ian, I will. Let me come, old man."

He hesitated just a moment.

"All right, Anna. Grab a coat and stick and come on. But don't you dare to come farther than Loch an Meall Beg."

They overtook Hugh and Ferguson at the Home Farm, where these two had waited to enrol old Duncan's son, Hamish, in the party. Ben Garra demanded that her conquerors should be strong men. Their heads down to the rain, the party of five set out up the glen.

She was waiting for him where they always met. "Ian!" she called, gladly.

For nearly three hours they climbed in silence, dumb before the chill of the misty uplands and the fearsomeness of lonely open spaces. At the top of that first steep climb Ian called a halt.

"Put a cartridge in the gun, Hugh, and let it go."

In silence Hugh loaded and pointed the gun into space. The feeble report of the shot wasted itself over the moorland. It was as if the noise sank hopelessly into the rolling clouds of mist. They stood for a time, listening at the stretch. But no answer came.

"No good," said Ian, curtly. "Come on."

On they went across the meaningless waves of the moor. The silence was terrible. Only an occasional word of command fell from the lips of Hugh, rapt over the face of a compass. No bird rose before their invading feet. They were swallowed up by the eternal hills.

On and on through the mist, over the endless exasperation of that grim upland, in a dogged silence—so they went for hours, as it seemed. At length a sharp word from Hugh startled them.

"Look out! The loch should be showing up soon."

"Keep together," added Ian.

On and on. Then a cry from Ferguson: "The loch! Here we are. I see the cairn."

"Round the cairn, then straight for the face of the rock," said Ian.

Within a quarter of an hour they came to a

halt under the sheer face of the mountain. Ian turned to his brother.

"Another shot, Hugh."

It rang loudly from the cliff behind them. A minute of hateful silence. Then, like the puff of a child's toy-pistol, there came to them through the mist an answering signal.

"Good!" cried Hugh. "Now for it!"

Ian turned to Anna and led her a little apart. "You'll wait here, dear."

She nodded, obedient to her man.

"Don't stir a foot," he urged. "Just here, in this little gully. Don't be frightened. We won't be long—not much more than an hour. You'll be as safe as houses."

"Of course I will," she answered, bravely. But her blue eyes doted on his face. "Be careful, Ian. Oh, be careful, my dear, my dear! I couldn't bear——" She broke off suddenly. "No, I'm silly. On you go, old man, and don't worry in the least about me."

They exchanged a look; then Ian turned quickly away,

"Come on!" he called peremptorily to the other three men. "We must get through this job while daylight lasts."

III.

THE last four hundred feet of Ben Garra are not difficult going for the climber who knows the way round by the flank of the hill. The sheer precipice that overlooks the loch is unscalable, but there is a fair track to the summit up the mountain shoulder. Even through the mist the hurrying party of four, all familiar with the route, climbed quickly.

They went about the rescue coolly. Every five minutes they halted to fire a shot. Every shot brought an answering thud out of the fog. And ever the answers were nearer at hand. Once they paused to shout in unison, and it did seem that a thin cry came back to them out of the air. They looked at each other. Hugh shook his head.

"No," he said, "you can't be sure. The imagination plays tricks. I'll fire another shot."

The sound crashed against the rocks, bounded off, and rolled away. Again came the answer, sharper than before.

"They're not on the top," said Ian. "We've reached their level. They must be on the ledge below the peak. Into single file, boys, and for God's sake go steadily. Come along."

Now they had to cut across the sheer face of the mountain, the cliff falling horribly to their left, along a sheep track that seemed to be leading them towards a ghastly leap into space. Young Hamish whispered to Hugh behind him:—

"It's here the eagles are nesting this season. They'll no' be far away now."

As he spoke a huge shadowy form swooped upon them out of the mist. They heard the beat of great wings, felt the swish of air disturbed.

"Look out!" cried Ian. "The eagles!"

He hurried on.

"Come on! come on!" he urged; then put his hands to his lips: "Coo-ee! Coo-ee!"

The call swirled weirdly through space like the mourning of a lost soul. Then, suddenly, a human wail near at hand appealed to them.

"Help! He-e-lp!" it called piteously. The wail was followed by a shriek, the horrid cry of a man in fear of death.

Now the rescue-party ran; and soon they saw before them the agony of a man who, standing above a huddled form on the ground, was beating at the giant birds that swooped upon him. He held his gun by the barrel and swept wildly with the butt at the eagles. The great talons clawed the air above his head; the powerful wings beat at his body. Then they saw one of the birds pass above the man, turn swiftly over the gully below, and come back with wings outstretched, a streak of fury. The man fell. The eagles barked and sailed away into the mist.

They found a man of sixty lying on the ground, his eyes staring, his forehead smeared with blood, and his white hair stained. Against his side, his head buried in the older man's jacket, crouched a boy, sobbing bitterly.

"The eagles! The eagles! O God! Look out!" screamed the father.

Hugh bent down, pressing a flask to the man's lips.

"Yes, yes," he soothed him. "Take a good pull. It's all right now. All right now. The eagles can't touch you. You'll be home soon. It's all right now."

"Oh, help! Take us away! For God's sake——" gasped the old man, and coughed over the spirit.

"Come along," said Ian, irritably. "Get them on to their feet. Hamish, you take the boy. Carry him if he can't walk. Hugh, you lead. Ferguson, you and I will take Mr. Small. Go slowly, Hugh. All ready? Forward!"

THUS they went down the hill in slow procession, but not in silence. The sobs of the boy, borne on the broad shoulders of Hamish, protested against the horror he had endured.

"That's what comes of shooting eagles," said Hamish, with grim justice.

And Small, his nerve shattered by the agony of his vigil, kept up his dreary, delirious chant of pain.

"The eagles! Keep them away! Oh, the

He held his gun by the barrel and swept wildly with the butt at the eagles.

eagles! I want to go home! I want to go home!"

"That's all right, Small. We'll get you home soon. Keep quiet, like a good man, and go steady. It's all right now."

Thus Ian, sympathetic but firm. His own nerves had suffered that day, and now he was in an agony of anxiety to know that Anna was safe. When at last they reached the level of the loch he cried to her:—

"Anna! Anna! We're coming, Anna!"

But no call came back in answer. Ian's eyes glanced swiftly and apprehensively to those of his brother.

"She can't have heard," he said, nervously. "Perhaps she's fallen asleep."

He ran before them to the crevice where he had left the girl to wait. But she was not there.

"Anna! Anna! Anna! Where are you?"

There was a scream in his voice, and the cliff mocked him with a silly, hysterical echo. The others hurried up to him, but they could only look at each other blankly. Silence. Then the gibbering monotone of Small, tearful now.

"The eagles! Oh, the eagles! I want to go home! I want to go home!"

A red wave of anger swept over Ian's mind.

"Take that chattering idiot to blazes out of here," he shouted. "Away with him, Ferguson, away before I kill somebody. Hugh—come on. We must find her. Quick! For God's sake, quick!"

He darted away along the base of the precipice.

"Anna! Anna!" he cried as he went.

Hugh hastened after him.

"Steady, old man," he said, quietly, at his shoulder. "Steady."

The figures of Ferguson and his party faded away into the mist that was still on the moorland. Night was coming down over Ben Garra. The harsh bark of the eagles echoed down the gullies.

"We mustn't go wild, old man," Hugh urged, gently. "Let's think of a plan and work cautiously. Let's——"

He was silenced by a glare from the wild eyes of Ian.

"Come on, come on, for Heaven's sake! Anna's not a fool. She wouldn't wander far." He was talking to appease his own terrors. "Come on. She'll be near at hand. Fallen asleep—something like that. Anna! Anna!"

There was no answer to that cry, but the agony behind it was soon to be relieved. Following the base of the cliff, they came to the stream that, plunging down a gully from the heights of Ben Garra, feeds the little Loch an Meall Beg. Among the boulders of its track lay Anna, her body curiously twisted, her face down to the ground.

"Anna!" shrieked Ian.

They ran forward to bend over her. Her hat had fallen off, and her golden hair was smeared with rain and blood.

"A falling stone," muttered Hugh. "We must have been kicking them down from the top."

Ian did not hear him, for his face was close to Anna's, and he had his arms about her.

"It's all right, Anna. We're here, dear," he murmured passionately to her white, impassive face. "You'll be all right soon, Anna."

She was alive, and that was everything. In the ecstasy of his relief, Ian clasped her to the warmth of his own body, and it was Hugh who chafed her hands and moistened her lips with brandy from his flask, working patiently while the lover doted over the unfortunate girl. At length she opened her eyes.

"Ian!"

It was little more than a whisper, but there was a world of joy and relief in the word. She closed her eyes once more and seemed to sleep.

"Anna!" whispered Ian. "It's all right, Anna."

"Yes, all right, dear," she repeated, hazily; and her eyes opened again. "Oh, I've been bad, Ian. I didn't keep my promise. I——"

Her whispering trailed away. Ian took the flask from Hugh and put it to her lips.

"Anna! Anna! Drink this—a little. It's all right, dear, it's all right."

Her eyes blinked open. She pulled at the flask, sighed, and sat up coughing.

"Do you think you can move now, dear?" asked Ian, anxiously.

"I think so. Let me try. Hugh, old man, your hand."

They lifted her to her feet. She swayed momentarily, then steadied herself with a hand on Ian's shoulder.

"I think I can manage," she said. "But oh, I've been so wicked. Tell me, Ian, you're not angry. Tell me——"

"Hush, dear," he urged her. "You mustn't talk. Quiet, now, like a good girl. Old Hugh and I are going to take you home. We won't be long. Look, the mist is lifting."

He pointed upwards, and they saw a pale star in a greenish evening sky.

"Good omen, Anna," said Hugh, cheerfully.

"You two dears," she murmured, happily. "I'm ready. Give me your arms."

So they went over the moor in the gloaming and down the hill till, only an hour before

midnight, they saw the light of the Dower House gleaming gently through the trees. Half an hour later Anna was asleep in a great four-poster bed in the guest-room.

Ian and Hugh were sitting over whisky and sandwiches when Ferguson was announced.

"There's bad news, Mr. Ian," he said, gravely. "Small wants to withdraw his offer for Dunsyre."

"Eagles too much for him, I suppose?" snapped Hugh.

"Withdraw?" said Ian, slowly; then, impatiently, "Oh, we'll see to-morrow. Tell him to come up here in the afternoon if he wants to see me."

IV.

IT was after the brothers had breakfasted in the morning-room of the Dower House that Anna came down to tell the story of her adventure under Ben Garra. For all the horror of the night before, she was radiant, and the morning sunlight caught her wonderful hair.

"Hullo!" cried Hugh. "Where are the bandages and the sticking-plaster?"

"None needed," she smiled. "I'm the luckiest person alive. But I must confess what a bad girl I was last night."

She dropped into a basket-chair by the window and looked at Ian. "Oh, don't look so severe, old man," she pleaded; "it makes me fidgety. And that's all that did happen to me last night—the fidgets."

"They dealt with you pretty thoroughly," said Hugh, blithely.

"Nasty boy," she retorted. "That was you—you and the eagles, knocking down stones from the hill on the head of a poor defenceless girl. But seriously—I got the fidgets awfully badly, waiting for you. All sorts of funny little stones were dropping down, and poor silly me, with nothing to do, thought it would be nice to gather souvenirs of the great rescue. That's really all, Ian—I took a little walk, gathering souvenirs."

She laughed at the triviality of the impulse that had nearly brought disaster.

"Thank goodness it was no worse!" said Ian, fervently.

"And one big souvenir came and knocked all the little ones out of your hands," Hugh chaffed her.

"No, it didn't, silly," she retorted; "I've got my souvenir upstairs. They're really funny little souvenirs—not ordinary stones at all, clever Master Hugh."

"Let's see them," he challenged.

"You'll find them on the mantelpiece of the guest-room, then."

With a laugh, Hugh bounded from his chair and hurried from the room, and the gaiety of the little meeting went with him. Between Ian and Anna there passed a look—a long, slow, lingering look of loving relief.

"Ian!" she murmured.

"Anna!"

It was almost a cry. He was so glad to realize that she was safe and well after that night of terror on the mountains. He held out his arms, and she rose from her chair to enter their strong embrace.

"Anna! Anna!" he murmured. "Thank Heaven it's all right. I nearly died of fright."

"Ian! Ian!" she crooned to him tenderly, "I——"

"If I'm not interrupting——"

It was the voice of Hugh, and the voice was excited. He ran to them, holding out a lump of dark stone about the size of a fist.

"That your souvenir, Anna?" he demanded, eagerly; and when she nodded, "Great Cæsar's almighty ghost!"

The wildness of his cry amazed them, and they stared at his rapt face.

"What is it?" asked Ian.

"What is it?" roared Hugh. "Listen to the man! What is it? I'll tell you what it is, old son. It's fourteen Rolls-Royces and a loaf of bread beneath the bough, and, Thou beside me singing in the wilderness!'

They looked at him blankly.

"Yes, I'll tell you what it is," said Hugh again. "I'm going for a long, long walk. Just you wait till I come back, my children, just you wait. I'll be a little time—but just you wait and sit tight. O frabjous day, calloo, callay, he chortled in his joy."

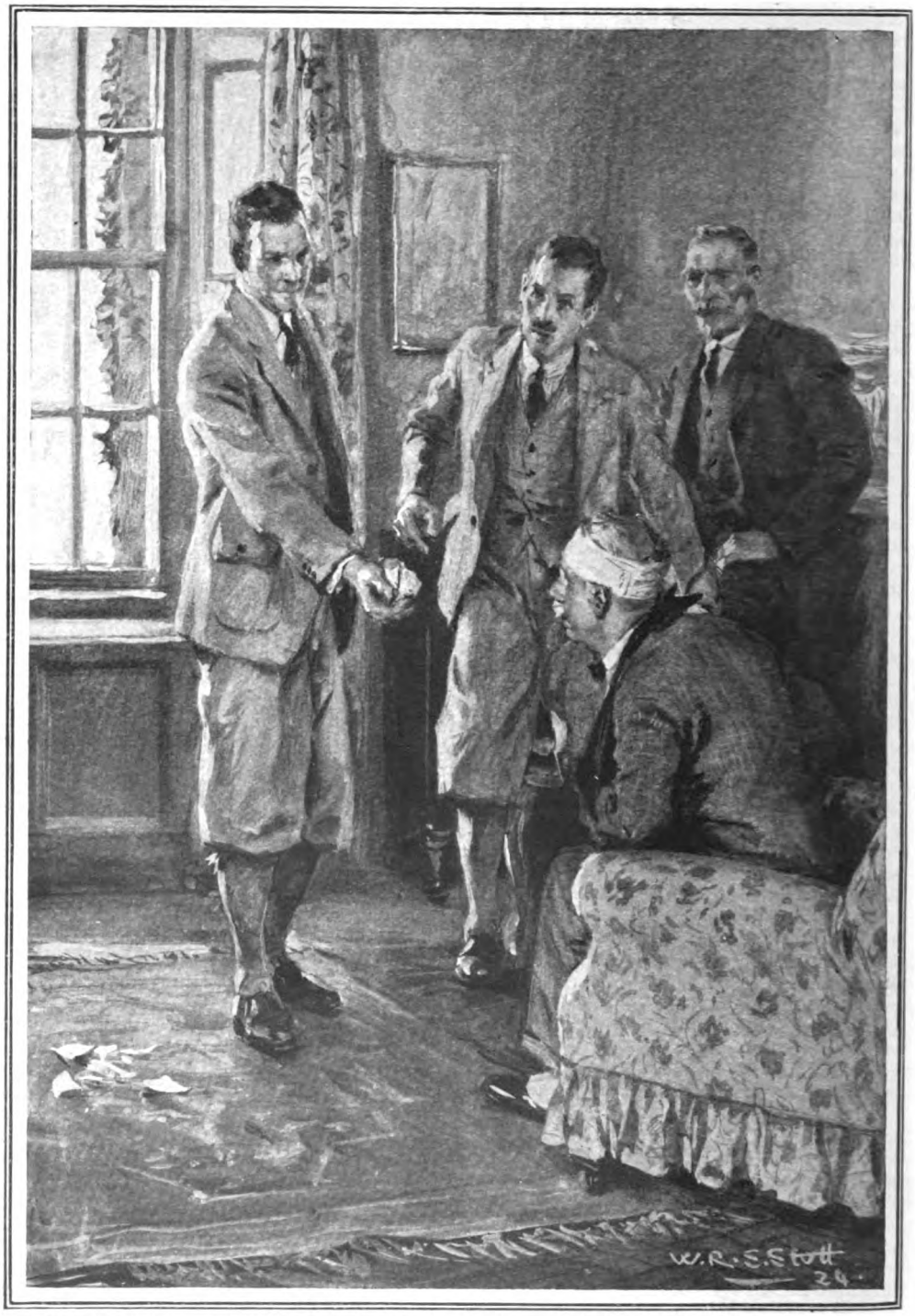
With these cryptic words, he ran from the room.

"What a man!" said Ian, smiling, to Anna, when Hugh was gone.

"I'd like to know——" said Anna, gravely; then passed abruptly to another mood: "But you'd better take me home to Scarbreck and my father's hearth."

FOR Ian the rest of that day passed slowly. There was work for him in Ferguson's office, but his heart was not in it. Why work for Dunsyre, when Dunsyre was so soon to pass out of his hands? But was it to pass out? Would he give back to Small, this eagle-shooting profiteer, his undertaking in the bargain? These were difficult and dreary questions, and Ian Duncan was tired. All the more did they harry his mind while he was alone.

He left Ferguson to his books after an hour of it. He tried to read, then turned to cleaning his guns. After lunch he went down to the river to fish; and gave up fishing to lie on the bank and stare at the waterfall above the Miller's Linn. It was with relief that he took down his rod at



"Mr. Small," he said, deliberately, holding out a piece of dark stone, "you're an engineer and an ironfounder. You know what that is?"

last and turned up the hill to meet his shooting-tenant in the Dower House.

Small was waiting for him, white and ill-at-ease, in the morning-room. His head was bandaged, his left arm was in a sling. Ferguson was there, grim and heavy and awkward on a high chair.

"Mr. Duncan——" said Small, rising.

"Good afternoon," said Ian, somewhat distantly, shaking hands; "I hope you are none the worse for yesterday's adventure."

Small smiled faintly.

"Not a great deal," he answered, nervously; "not a great deal, but—you'll admit—— My boy——"

"I quite understand, Mr. Small." Ian interrupted him curtly. "You got a very bad fright. And you feel that Dunsyre will have some rather unhappy associations for you. And you want to go back on your bargain."

"Not go back," pleaded Small, eagerly; "not go back exactly. Compensation, of course. I'll admit that at once, Mr. Duncan. Generous compensation, too. You'll admit, Mr. Duncan——"

"Quite."

Somehow the man's presence exasperated Ian. He was so weak, almost tearful, this slayer of eagles. The passion of his caste against the morality typified in Small blazed up suddenly in Ian, and he rasped vindictively:—

"No, Mr. Small. I hate to think of Dunsyre going to a man who thinks it fun to shoot eagles. But I *won't* give you back your letter. It goes to be stamped to-night." He added, bitterly: "It would have gone last night but for your folly on Ben Garra."

The explosion was so fierce that Small found himself dumb. His face, white against the cushions of his chair, stared blankly at Ian. An uncomfortable silence settled on the group.

It was broken by the entrance of Hugh Duncan. He was dusty, he looked tired, but there was an amused smile on his face as he sank into a chair.

"What's the trouble?" he asked, easily.

"I've just refused to give Mr. Small back his letter," said Ian, sullenly. "What do you think yourself?"

"I would give it to him," responded Hugh, lightly. "After all, we don't want our eagles blown to pieces. Have you got the letter with you, Ferguson, by any chance?"

From his pocket Ferguson produced an envelope and handed it to Hugh. Lazily, while the others watched him, Hugh opened it and read it through.

"Quite a good price," he commented, casually. "Quite a good price."

Then he spoke vigorously.

"But not quite good enough—not by a long chalk. There—so!"

And while they watched him he tore the paper into shreds and threw the pieces on the floor.

"Hugh!" cried Ian.

But Hugh was on his feet, glaring at Small. He held out in his right hand a piece of dark stone about the size of a man's fist.

"Mr. Small," he said, deliberately, "you're an engineer and an ironfounder, and you made money out of it during the war. You know what that is?"

Small blinked at him.

"That's hematite!" he gasped.

"Precisely. Hematite. With a good dose of manganese about it. An eighty-per-cent. ore, Mr. Small. And there's a vein of it down the back of Ben Garra that would have made your fortune!"

They gasped at him.

"I've just been there," cried Hugh, "and I've prospected round and round. And I'm sure—dead sure. I got the hint this morning. That was the lump of rock Anna Mentieth picked up last night, and I knew it. I knew it at once. It's all right, Mr. Small"—he broke into another tone—"you're free from your bargain. Dunsyre is safe for the Duncans, and so are the eagles. And don't forget, Mr. Small, it was the eagles that dropped the hint that is going to save this house."

He turned from Small to look with a radiant face up the glen.

"Eagles on Ben Garra!" he said, simply. "Good old eagles! And good old Anna and her souvenirs!"

BARELY an hour later Ian and Anna, trembling with joy, stood arm in arm on the little hill behind the Dower House. They were watching two specks that rose and swooped and climbed again about the peak of Ben Garra, golden in the evening light.

"Nice eagles," said Anna.

A BEETHOVEN SONATA.
By L. Balestrieri.
By permission of the Syndicat de la Propriété Artistique, Paris.

Music in Pictures

by Herbert S. Greenhalgh

FOR ages past artists have found a rich source of inspiration in the atmosphere and achievements of music, and there could surely be no more ideal union. Pure romance, passionate feeling, and that "something," as Barrie would say, which goes down to the roots of life and touches the vital chords of human emotion—all are here, and provide abundant scope for the art of the painter.

The artist of many years ago most frequently sought his material in the wealth of picturesque and dramatic incident which marked the lives of the great composers.

Side by side with this, there has been a tendency among painters—more marked, perhaps, in recent years—to utilize music purely and simply as a theme, and it may well be in this direction that it has served them best. The glamour of love, the play upon the mind of ineffaceable memories, the sweet innocence of child life, the spirit of poetry that inhabits the cottage as well as the palace—all these have been depicted on canvas through the medium of music, and the result, as was inevitable in such a combination of elemental arts, has been singularly moving and inspiring.

The accompanying illustrations — reproductions of well-known paintings—are a few examples of what has been achieved. The first is "A Beethoven Sonata," and it exemplifies in a striking way the intense love of the great master's music, and its power to move the listener to his depths. The scene is the interior of a cottage, and the players are simple folk who make no pretensions to the accomplishments of virtuosos. But in the background may be dimly seen the Spirit of Beethoven, and that is the fine inspiration of these music-makers.

The opening notes of the great Kreutzer Sonata flood into the room. Soon the players are lost in the rapture of their task, and the rich melodiousness of the music holds those around spellbound. As the sweep of its passion increases, one of the listeners is almost overcome by his emotion. It is a moving scene, of a kind that seems to belong to such surroundings, and the artist has caught the atmosphere of it admirably.

A picture differing materially, even violently, in character is Orchardson's canvas, "Her Mother's Voice." We are transported to the opulent ease of a palatial drawing-room. There are refinement and taste, and the fine things that riches buy. There is the glamour of Love's young dream. Two souls are one in happiness, and a care-free maiden sings with joyful heart to her lover.

Yet the room has sadness in it. There is no power like music to recall the past, and the girl's notes, trilling triumphantly forth, have revived tender memories in the mind of one who is now a figure of loneliness. What a faithful cameo of life—sunshine and shadows, bright relief and dark contrast! How aptly and humanly it is all conveyed in this musical setting!

I am reminded by the next illustration, showing Maude Goodman's "A Labour of Love," of a conversation I once had with M. Moiseiwitsch, the well-known pianist, on the subject of the child's musical training. He told me that, in order to encourage his daughter to develop a love for music while still young, he gave her an Irish harp, an instrument capable of producing musical sounds of rich beauty, and easy to play. The result, he said, had been entirely what he wished.

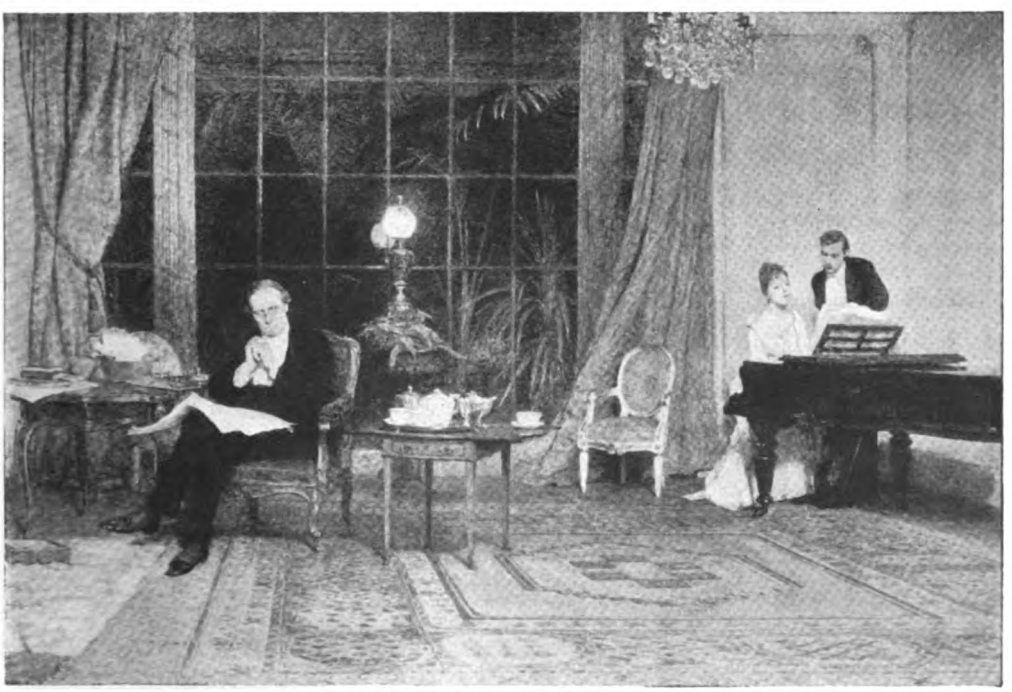
Miss Goodman, in her painting—one of many in which she has used music as her theme—has portrayed a similar idea. A father is teaching his child to play the zither. The child is plucking the strings with one hand, while in the other she is holding the plectrum with which the melody is picked out. The mother, reclining in a chair at the side, looks affectionately on.

We come next to one of the most striking pictures of its kind ever painted. It shows us Rouget de l'Isle singing his newly-composed "Marseillaise," the finest national anthem in the world, to a company of his compatriots.

The "Marseillaise" was, of course, an offspring of the French Revolution. The volunteers of the Bas Rhin had been ordered to join Luckner's army, and at a dinner given before their departure the Mayor of Strasburg lamented the lack of a patriotic melody which would have the power to stir the blood of the populace.

De l'Isle was not at that time looked upon as a composer of more than ordinary attainments, but the words of the Mayor fired him with a desire to write the song that France needed. He returned to his rooms, and set to work upon his task. Melody after melody was rejected, and it was not until daylight was dawning that the inspiration he sought came to him.

His composition was not, as originally



HER MOTHER'S VOICE.
By Sir W. Q. Orchardson.

A LABOUR OF LOVE

By Maude Goodman.

By permission of the Berlin Photographic Company.

ROUGET DE L'ISLE SINGING THE "MARSEILLAISE."

By Isidore Pils.

By permission of the Autotype Fine Art Co., Ltd.

written, the finished thing that it is to-day, for various musicians have embellished its harmonics, but it had genius in it, and when De l'Isle sang it for the first time in the presence of the Mayor and a few prominent townspeople the effect was electrical. "To arms! Form your battalions! The day has come! March on! March on! To death or victory!"—one can imagine how the listeners were thrilled by the fire and lilt of the music. The drama and enthusiasm of the moment have been admirably caught by Isidore Pils in his painting.

A VIOLIN CONCERTO.

By John Gulich.

From a photograph supplied by W. F. Mansell.

In "A Violin Concerto" the artist has gone for his inspiration to the concert-hall. The scene is familiar to most of us—the crowded ranks of the orchestra, each member contributing to the feast of glorious sound, and, standing boldly out, the figure of the soloist almost swaying to the rhythm and passion of the music. It would be easy to believe that Gulich had in his mind a typical Promenade Concert, for it is here that one finds that peculiarly sincere type of music-lover which would be in harmony with the fine imaginative touch he has imparted to his picture.

There is something more in such surroundings than mere players and instruments; there is the Spirit of Music. It is this strange, indefinable thing that the artist has made the feature of his work, and he has brought to bear upon it remarkable delicacy and art.

"Reverie" is another great artist's interpretation of the profound emotions expressed in "Her Mother's Voice." A young girl is sitting at the piano, and as the music fills the room her father relapses into deep thought. Memories flood into his mind of someone whose fingers once played the same chords, and gradually he seems to see her figure take shape near the instrument. The work of Sir Frank Dicksee, now President of the Royal Academy, the painting is an eloquent sermon on the reminiscent influence of music.

L. Campbell Taylor has gone back to the crinoline period for his costumes—to the days when that charming form of music, the quartet, was probably a more prominent feature of family musical life than it is at the present time. We are shown a quartet

REVERIE.

By Sir Frank Dicksee.

By permission of the Walker Art Gallery.

THE REHEARSAL.

By L. Campbell Taylor.

By permission of Eyre & Spottiswoode, publishers of the large plate.

SONGS WITHOUT WORDS.
By J. Young Hunter.
By permission of the Berlin Photographic Company.

party in the throes of a rehearsal, in the foreground being the expert musician who has come in to exercise his friendly offices in the capacity of conductor. There is a delightful touch of faithfulness in the stopping of the general proceedings while the old gentleman with the 'cello is put through his paces alone.

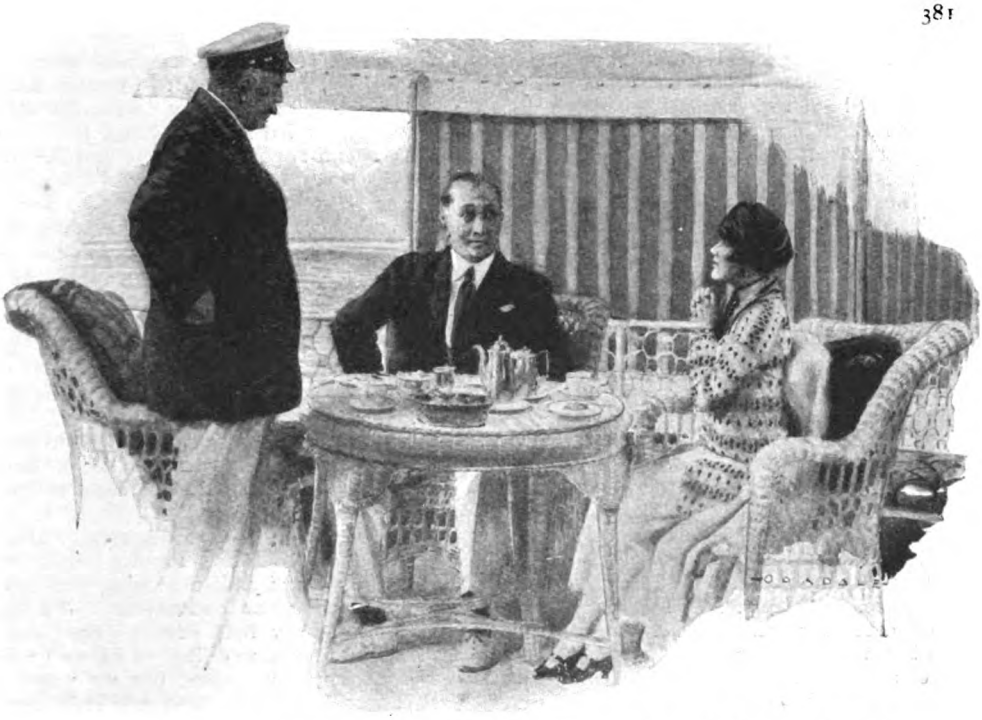
IMPROVISATION.
By Louis Tessier.
By permission of the Syndicat de la Propriété Artistique, Paris.

THE APOTHEOSIS OF BEETHOVEN.
By J. P. Laurens.
By permission of the Syndicat de la Propriété Artistique, Paris.

It is also the old-world, romantic atmosphere that characterizes J. Young Hunter's "Songs Without Words." Mendelssohn's well-known melodies, in their fragrance and sweet appeal, form excellent material for the painter's art, and Mr. Hunter has utilized it here with striking effect.

It is the gladness of spring that is suggested in Tessier's picture, "Improvisation," and the artist must have been delighted to find in music an ideal means of imparting freshness to his subject. He has a typically glorious pastoral scene, but what immediately arrests the attention is the characteristic note of joyous abandon that is added to it by the figure in the foreground. There is inspiration in such a setting. What more natural than that this musician should feel an irresistible impulse to express her exhilaration in the rich melody of the violin?

We end, as we began, on Beethoven. We have come, indeed, to probably the most extraordinary canvas of the series, and one that only the great master himself could have made possible. Even to the non-musical mind, J. P. Laurens's picture conveys a story of wonderful power and appeal. As the orchestra plays there rises out of the mist, as it were, the figure of Beethoven himself, and hovering round him are spirit forms representing the end-less range of emotions he has expressed in his music—Love and Death, Victory and Defeat; the triumph of Hope, and the tragedy of souls torn with anguish. It is the whole drama of life that we see. If the artist had merely wished to depict that he could hardly have had a better medium. But he has done more; he has epitomized with singular insight and taste some of the greatest music of all time.



"Are we near Polpooe?" cried Mrs. Proctor. "Why didn't you tell us? That's where Elizabeth lives."

Middle-Aged

By

ARNOLD BENNETT

ILLUSTRATED BY E. G. OAKDALE

I.

THE yacht *Aphra* was sailing down the Channel, and the company, which consisted of the owner (usually addressed as Jackie) and Mr. and Mrs. Proctor, were having tea on deck. The skipper was at the wheel, the engineer was in the engine-room, and the rest of the crew lounged about forward. The yacht *Aphra* was a ketch of one hundred and twenty-five tons, and whenever she put into a minor port she was referred to in the local Press as "the fine ketch," because no yacht of any size is allowed to put into a minor port without a complimentary adjective.

With just a breath of wind dead aft, the yacht *Aphra* was on an even keel; her sails were wide outspread; the engine was helping the sails. The sea was smooth—and empty, save for one or two tramp steamers in the offing. At a distance of four or five miles low, undulating hills, with an occasional cove, cliff, village, church-steeple, white tape of road, were all that could be descried of that enigmatic, weird, self-sufficient isle, England. The sun shone; half-concealed within its warm rays was the tang, the nip, which throughout the English summer wholesomely reminds humanity that winter is not far behind and winter not far ahead. In a word, the scene was one of ideal peace

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and felicity, and nobody could have guessed that a tremendous upset—moral, not physical—was about to happen.

The huge mainsail suddenly flapped with a report like thunder.

"This wind is getting tired of life," said the owner, who often spoke in metaphors and images, and he rose and went and sat on the poop on the opposite side of the wheel from the captain. He was a stoutish man of fifty or more; so was the captain; the chief difference between them seemed to be that the captain had brass buttons while the owner hadn't.

In a few minutes the owner returned to the slightly-swaying tea-table.

"Look here," said he. "I don't know so much about this sailing-all-night business to-night. Glass is rising. There'll soon be a dead calm. Of course, we shall carry the tide for another two hours, but after that, with the tide against us, we shall do no good with the engine alone, especially round the Nose. Moreover, the engineer can't be expected to work all the clock round. So I think we'll just drop an anchor in Polpoce, and leave early in the morning, say seven-thirty. We sha'n't be losing any time, and we shall have a quiet night." Which was not what he thought, but what the captain thought. He always came back full of marine knowledge and wisdom from chats with the captain.

"Polpooe!" cried Mrs. Proctor, with surpri ing vivacity. "Are we near Polpooe? Why didn't you tell us?" That's where Elizabeth lives."

THE social atmosphere of the deck was changed in an instant; waves of excitement radiated from Mrs. Proctor and disturbed the serenity of her husband and the owner. She was a little woman, slim, lively, dynamic. Her complexion might be in ruins, but not her eyes and her emotions. Though the twenty-fifth anniversary of her wedding was nigh, though she had two daughters and two sons, all of whom were adult or adolescent, and all of whom could and did attempt to give her lessons in everything, from lip-sticks to politics, she still violently counted with men, and on them, and could be as wilful, capricious, naughty, and charming as a girl.

Mr. Proctor lazily agreed that Polpooe *was* where Elizabeth lived. Mr. Proctor was rather a big man, who knew all about women through the study of his wife—his wife being all women rolled into one—and was cheerfully, if sardonically, resigned to the facts of nature.

"I must call on her to-night," announced Mrs. Proctor.

"But look here, Tikky, why?" Mr. Proctor protested. (Her name was Marcella, and nobody, not even Mr. Proctor, knew why he called her "Tikky." By the way, her children called her Tikky, too.)

"You can't go calling on people like that!"

"Elizabeth isn't 'people.'"

"But it's only by chance we're going into Polpooe. Supposing the wind had held——"

"What's the good of supposing?" Mrs. Proctor demanded. "Men are so queer. We are going into Polpooe, and I couldn't possibly go there without calling to see Elizabeth. She'd never forgive me."

"She wouldn't know anything about it."

"But I should know, silly!"

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Mr. Proctor, and, turning to the owner: "Look here, Jackie, if I were you I should refuse to have a boat lowered."

"Jackie wouldn't be so disgusting, would you, Jackie?" Mrs. Proctor took the owner's hand and smiled at him, the smile of the unscrupulous enchantress. "Elizabeth's one of my best friends. She was a bridesmaid at my wedding. I haven't seen her for twenty-five years, but we write to each other every year and tell each other *everything*. Now don't be horrid, Jackie. And *you'll* have to come with me, Arthur."

Arthur Proctor groaned.

Off and on Mrs. Proctor talked about Elizabeth until the yacht *Aphra* dropped an anchor in Polpooe harbour.

"Oh, what a lovely little place!" cried Mrs. Proctor, and kept on crying, "Oh, what a lovely little place!" And it was, indeed, a pleasing small port, with hills on either side, and the houses of a tiny town climbing up them.

"Oh! And there's Elizabeth's house!" cried Mrs. Proctor, pointing to a green-clad residence with a steeply-sloping garden that ended in a long, curved, irregular flight of stone steps leading down to the sea's level.

"How do you know it's Elizabeth's house?" asked Mr. Proctor, stroking his sparsely-covered cranium.

"From the photographs, of course, stupid! Jackie, don't bother to have the launch lowered. I know it's an awful lot of trouble. We'll go in the dinghy."

Soon after the sails had been stowed two tired mariners lowered the dinghy, and Mr. and Mrs. Proctor, somewhat titivated for the occasion, stepped into it and were rowed ashore, and presently were seen from the yacht breasting the slope towards Elizabeth's house. Mrs. Proctor continued to laud Elizabeth, and to express her absolute certainty that Elizabeth would be just the same as she had ever been. Nevertheless, as she and Arthur entered the

porch of Elizabeth's abode Mrs. Proctor was seized with a great fear and terrible apprehension.

"It's a ticklish affair," thought she, "seeing someone you haven't seen for five-and-twenty years. I feel frightfully awkward. I sha'n't know what to say to her. Supposing she's—— Arthur, you're so good at small-talk. Now mind you keep the conversation going."

The little thing's heart fluttered most disturbingly. It told her that this was the most dangerous enterprise that she had ever undertaken in all her life. She wished to Heaven she had never left the yacht *Aphra*. If the well-beloved Elizabeth proved a disappointment, provided a tragic disillusion!

Ages seemed to pass. Mrs. Proctor, restless, looked round at the coarsely-carved wood of the porch, at the cheap imitation stained glass in the door. Suburban! No, provincial! She felt the nocturnal deadness of the little town. She was ashamed that her husband should see the environment in which lived the adorable Elizabeth whom she was always vaunting to him. She was about to say to him, "Nobody in. No use waiting any longer," when the door slowly opened, and as she saw it opening Mrs. Proctor had a sense of disappointment. She would have preferred that nobody should be in. Strangeness of human nature!

II.

A MIDDLE-AGED, rather unkempt, and lanky man stood in the doorway. He had a moustache, a beard, neither of which would Mrs. Proctor have tolerated in a husband. A bony and apprehensive face! Dishevelled grey hair! A brown suit that in the friction and strain of life had lost both shape and pattern! One pocket bulged with a garden-trowel; the other bulged with articles unseen—no doubt pipes and pouches and matches and things. The man must have long since ceased to care what he looked like.

"Oh! Good evening," Mrs. Proctor began, impulsively, desperately.

"Good evening," said the man, coldly, and added: "We don't let rooms."

"Oh, it's not that!" protested Mrs. Proctor. "I—we—just called to see Mrs. Draver. I——"

"Mrs. Draver is not in this evening," said the man, still coldly; but he did suggest: "Can I do anything?"

"Are you Mr. Draver?" Mrs. Proctor asked, with a distressing attempt at a seductive smile, and death in her heart. Surely impossible that this man was the husband of the beloved Elizabeth!

"Yes," said he.

Mrs. Proctor glanced at Mr. Proctor for help, because Mr. Proctor always charmed everybody.

"Our name is Proctor," said Mr. Proctor, with the whole of his charm. "We're yachting down the coast, and as we've put in here for the night my wife thought——"

"Proctor? Proctor?" murmured Mr. Draver, blankly.

"Yes," exploded Mrs. Proctor, impatiently. "I'm Marcella—Tikky."

"Ah, yes!" Mr. Draver seemed to be drawing up something long-forgotten from the deepest depths of memory. "Ah, yes!" And then again: "Yes, yes!" And then an original idea visited him. "Do come in," he said, as if saying: "We're in a great difficulty. Somebody must act, and I suppose I'd better act."

He went even further and shook hands.

"Come through into the garden, will you? It's a beautiful evening. I was just pottering about and watering. You fond of gardening? Elizabeth's gone to the pictures with the mayor." (A sort of naive satisfaction in the word "mayor"!) "She hasn't been out at night for months. I never go out at night myself. Doesn't suit me. Lovely view here, isn't it?"

It was a lovely view, and Mr. and Mrs. Proctor said so with perhaps exaggerated enthusiasm.

"Elizabeth will be sorry to miss you," said Mr. Draver. "But I'll tell her you've called."

"How kind you are!" thought Mrs. Proctor, in fury.

No suggestion that they should wait until Elizabeth returned from the pictures! No suggestion that they should call on the morrow!

"I expect you'll be leaving again early to-morrow," said Mr. Draver.

"I'm afraid we shall," said Mr. Proctor. "You see, we mustn't miss the west-going tide. The skipper says we ought to weigh anchor not later than eight o'clock."

"Elizabeth *never* gets up early," said Mr. Draver, with much sincerity and conviction. "Servant doesn't get up till eight o'clock. They won't, you know, in these days. It's *her* night out, too."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Mr. Proctor, simply, as they descended the slope again towards the quay. "Great Scott!"

Mrs. Proctor ejaculated nothing at all. She was thinking: "So that's my Elizabeth's life!" And the thought filled all her mind, and devastated it, and was unutterable.

"The whole thing is perfectly plain to me," said the owner, when the trio were sitting in the green-tinted saloon and he had heard the story—or rather had heard two different stories, one sardonic from Arthur

Proctor, and one resentful and half-tragic from Tikky.

"What's perfectly plain to you?" Mrs. Proctor demanded, quite ready for a shindy with her host and determined to tolerate playful nonsense from nobody.

"I will interpret this dark matter, lady. And you shall see a great light," Jackie smiled, teasingly.

Mrs. Proctor raised a warning finger. "I don't mind what you do as long as you don't try to be funny. I can't stand funniness to-night."

"My dear Tikky," said the owner. "Let me say that I never thought more highly of your phantom friend Elizabeth than I do at this moment. She is evidently a wise woman. She thinks as I do, that to search out a friend whom one hasn't seen for a quarter of a century is an act of madness. Why were you kept so long at the front door? Obviously because Elizabeth at a bedroom window happened to see you coming up the street. She——"

"Ridiculous!" observed Tikky. "She wouldn't have recognized me after all that time."

"Not recognized you, my dear Tikky?

The oration was cut short by Mrs. Proctor snatching a handful of cigarettes from the box and wildly flinging them at her host's features.

I've known you for more than a quarter of a century, and I assure you that you haven't changed in the least."

Mrs. Proctor told him not to be absurd, but in spite of herself she could not help believing him.

He went on: "To resume. Your Elizabeth saw you from her bedroom window, where she was probably turning down the bed—or beds—the servant being out, and conscientiously imitating the ways of servants by taking a spell off to watch the interesting street. 'That's Tikky!' said she to herself, horror-struck, and ran down into the garden to her husband to tell him to lie to you. She had grasped in an instant that it would be fatal for you and her to meet again. She taught her somewhat stupid husband exactly what to say to you, and in what tone, and then she fled upstairs again, and no doubt leaned over the banisters to peep at you going through the house. And now she's making her husband repeat to her everything that you said in the garden and congratulating herself on having preserved her dearest illusion—namely, yourself. For twenty-five years you've been growing more and more perfect in her eyes, just as she's been growing more and more perfect in yours. And she was bent on keeping you

perfect. Yes, a wise woman, your Elizabeth! I should have liked to make her acquaintance. Of course, her illusions about you may have been a bit damaged by what bit she saw of you and heard of you, but speaking broadly——"

The oration was cut short by Mrs. Proctor snatching a handful of cigarettes from the box and wildly flinging them at her host's features.

"Never mind, Tikky!" Arthur Proctor soothed his wife, benevolently.

The owner laughed. Husband and wife retired to their cabin. But in the wakeful middle of the night Tikky reflected: "Did she keep out of my way on purpose? *Did* she keep out of my way on purpose?"

III.

THE next morning was marvellous. Tikky, lying in her bunk, watched a spot of earliest sunlight wander up and down the wall of the cabin as the yacht *Aphra* swayed very gently in the water. There, in the opposite bunk, lay the immense, mountainous form of Arthur, sleeping as usual just like a child. Nothing less than the wrecking of the ship would wake Arthur. He slept peacefully even through the deck-scrubbing, which to those below presented the characteristics of something apocalyptic and final in the earth's history. Well, Tikky had to get up. Why? Foolish creature, she wanted to gaze across the sunlit water at Elizabeth's house. She arose. She contented herself with a cold bath (for the routine of the yacht *Aphra* must not be disarranged), and she dressed summarily, in an athletic or sporting fashion, and hid her hair in a sort of mob-cap contrived out of one of Arthur's coloured silk handkerchiefs. Then she went and sat in the deckhouse, and she gazed across the sunlit water at Elizabeth's house, with its hanging garden and its long flight of stone steps descending to the sea's edge, and it was just as beautiful as she had imagined. The whole port had the air of being enchanted.

Then, glancing below, she saw Bill, the senior steward, punctual to the minute, on his way to her cabin with two large cups of tea and a plate of bread-and-butter.

"Here, Bill," said she. "I'll have mine here. Wake Mr. Proctor and give him his, will you?" And she took her cup and two pieces of bread-and-butter.

But instead of drinking and eating she gazed and dreamed. Twenty-five years married, with offspring who taught their mamma how to suck eggs! Not a bit. She was a young girl—and Elizabeth was a young girl.

Half-way between the shore and the yacht a row-boat was approaching, with a rough-clad fisherman in it, and a woman.

"Am I going to faint?" thought Tikky, and it seemed to her that life was leaving her as she suspected, guessed, divined that the woman was Elizabeth. (Elizabeth, who *never* got up early!) Never was a young virginal girl more excited, more ecstatic, more purely thrilled than the mother of four adults in that dizzy moment. Her faith in her own sex and in humanity returned like a great tide and swamped every other conviction. She sprang up, ran on to the deck, and stood over the bulwarks. The boat was a thousand years in reaching the yacht *Aphra's* side!

"Elizabeth!"

"Tikky!"

The names were whispered as though the women had a secret to share. The deck was deserted, the crew being now at breakfast, No gangway had been let down, because the yacht *Aphra* was a self-contained unit that morning and nobody had to go ashore. But Elizabeth seized hold of the mizzen shrouds and hauled herself over the rail with the agility of a child. (It was wonderful!) The fisherman murmured that he had to pay a call at a neighbouring schooner and would come back for the lady in half an hour.

"Come, come!" whispered Tikky, in agitation, and, having cruelly hugged her, led Elizabeth through the deckhouse down the staircase. There was an unoccupied cabin, and into this Tikky pushed her friend. It was the sole place in the yacht *Aphra* where the cronies would be safe from intrusion.

"Darling, you haven't changed a bit!"

"Nor you!"

They spoke quite sincerely. Each of these fond middle-aged creatures saw in the other a mere girl.

"Wait!" said Tikky, and skipped out of the cabin and fetched first her tea and bread-and-butter from the deckhouse and, second, Arthur's tea and bread-and-butter (the giant still slept), and she shut the door of the cabin. And Tikky sat on the bunk and Elizabeth sat on a chair, and they drank and ate and looked at one another and gradually perceived the mature women in the girls.

"You silly!" said Elizabeth, in just her old remembered somewhat caustic tone. "You're crying into your tea!"

"I know I am, and I don't care!" Tikky replied, gruffly, with just her old remembered tone of sturdy defiance.

IV.

"I SUPPOSE you wonder what on earth I do with myself all the year round in this little pudding-basin of a place," said Elizabeth, breaking the first little silence that had occurred in their talk

This was after they had been "at it" for some time.

"No, I don't," said Tikky, admiring Elizabeth's graphic phrase, "pudding-basin of a place"—so characteristic of her, as Tikky now recalled. "I'm jolly sure you find plenty of interesting things to do."

"That, infant, is a whopper! You know I don't," said Elizabeth, calmly, and looked Tikky full in the eyes.

Elizabeth had a shrewd, tolerant, somehow negligent face. She was a large woman, not stout, but spaciously built. Her hair was still as black as coal. Although the hour was early, she had several fine rings on her fingers, and she was excellently dressed, and with much care.

"Is it a whopper?"

"It is a whopper. Ever since you called last night to see me you've been adding up the situation, and you've been asking yourself what in the name of Heaven I do with myself here. Me, the high-spirited young thing that used to go to two parties a night and make havoc among a whole sex. Do you think I don't know what my reputation was?"

"Well, what in the name of Heaven *do* you do with yourself, then? Your Jimmy is engineering in Durham. Your Anna is learning frock-making in Kensington. You were never one for reforming the poor against their will. You've nobody——"

"Except my husband," Elizabeth interrupted, quickly and positively.

"That was what I was going to say," Tikky agreed, almost guiltily, fearing lest the perspicacious Elizabeth was already reading her secret thoughts about Mr. Draver, whom Tikky certainly regarded as the dullest, flattest, stupidest, untidiest, most commonplace of created males. Here indeed was the disconcerting problem for Tikky: how could Elizabeth stand her husband?

"NOW, I'll tell you what I do. If it's fine I sit in the garden and admire the view up the coast. And if it's wet I sit inside at the window and admire the view up the coast. You won't deny it's a marvellous view. Also, if I feel particularly energetic, I watch my husband gardening. As for going out of a night, never in the world! Last night at the pictures was an astounding exception—one of those things you simply can't explain. I tell you it was so unusual that it was an event in my life."

"Your husband's a great gardener, isn't he?"

"Not at all, my dear. He's a gardener. He doesn't garden all the time. He reads the *Daily Telegraph* through every day, and that takes him from two to three hours."

"Well, you are a slothful pair."

"I shouldn't call Leonard slothful," said Elizabeth. "He's twelve years older than me. He worked a lot too hard until he retired from engineering. And his health isn't too good. If he's idle he's earned it; but he isn't."

"I'm sure he's earned it," said Tikky, eagerly and kindly, for she had noticed a touch of genuine seriousness in Elizabeth's humorous voice.

"Tikky," Elizabeth began in a new tone, leaning forward on the chair, which was too small for her. "I am about to confide to you the secret of my life. I've never written it to you because it isn't the sort of thing that sensible people write about. My husband is jealous. My Leonard is a jealous husband, fiercely and untiringly jealous."

"Oh!"

"I have to put up with any old stick of a servant because my Leonard hates me to be human with servants. We might have kept Jimmy at home, or near home, only Leonard really preferred him to go because Jimmy and I were always so thick together. Same with Anna. I really only went to the pictures last night in order to defy Leonard—you see, I have to keep him within bounds. He's always been jealous of you—yes, though we only write to each other about once a year! He's always finding excuses to move your photograph off the bedroom mantelpiece. And I bet anything he was pretty rudish to you last night when you called. You see, he can't help it."

"I wouldn't say he was rude, my child," said Tikky, without conviction.

"I didn't say rude, I said rudish," Elizabeth laughed. "I had to take him firmly in hand last night. Yes, I got angry because he hadn't made you stay till I came home, or come and hiked me out of the cinema. I frightened him." Elizabeth looked grave. "We had a great scene of reconciliation after he'd apologized. But I made him get up at six-thirty this morning and go out on his bicycle and find me a boat. I say, of course I wouldn't talk in this style to another soul! You know that, don't you?"

"Naturally I know it, you silly fool!" Tikky retorted, blandly. "But, I say——"

"What?"

"Seeing as we're talking like this, isn't it rather trying for you, all this—er—jealousy?"

"Trying!" exclaimed Elizabeth. "You bet it's trying. But it's lovely, my child. I'm that man's passion. I'm his atmosphere. I'm his climate. I'm his life. I'm all his life. I'm the last thing he thinks about before he goes to sleep and the first

thing he thinks about when he wakes up. He's in a perfect fever this very moment because I insisted on coming off to you alone. I dress for him. I wear jewels for him—jewels that he pays for. And it's been so for twenty-four years. And I'm in my fiftieth year. Can you beat it, my infant? Isn't it enough? What does it matter to me in what sort of a pudding-basin place I live? I've succeeded."

Tikky dangled her leg against the side of the bunk. Her face had the look of one to whom revelation has been vouchsafed and the dark meaning of existence rendered clear.

V.

SUDDENLY Mrs. Proctor slipped off the bunk and seemed to be listening—or at any rate to be fixing one or other of her five senses on some mysterious phenomenon. She swayed slightly. The teaspoon in the cup and saucer which she had placed on the little tip-up table by the bunk shifted its position with a slight metallic click. She dashed out of the cabin. The second steward was rubbing the walls of the corridor.

"What are we doing?" she demanded, anxiously.

"We're at sea, madam."

"But I never heard the anchor-chains."

"No, madam. While you were ashore last night, as there was a mooring-buoy not being used, the captain thought it would save time this morning if we got the anchor then and just moored to the buoy. So we only had to cast off this morning."

Mrs. Proctor did not entirely understand these technical statements, but she thought she did, and was more than ever convinced that seamanship was an odd business.

"But the engine isn't going!"

"No, madam."

"And I didn't hear the sails go up."

"No, madam. You see, there's a very nice fair breeze, and so the captain only hoisted the staysail, so as not to disturb anybody below."

"But——"

Mrs. Proctor did not proceed farther with the steward. She perceived in a flash how an awful thing had come about. Neither the captain nor the crew had seen Elizabeth arrive on board. They were all at breakfast in the forecastle. Elizabeth had embarked silently, used no gangway, and her own boat had vanished for the time being. Breakfast finished, the captain had given his orders, beautifully ignorant of the presence of a stranger on board, and the yacht *Aphra* had stolen away and stolen Mrs. Draver from her spouse.

Mrs. Draver appeared with a puzzled face at the door of the cabin.

"My dear, something simply frightful has happened. The captain didn't know you were on board and we're at sea."

"Well, the captain will have to put back, then," said Mrs. Draver, calmly.

"Put back?" Mrs. Proctor repeated the phrase. A hundred-and-twenty five-ton yacht did not put back. You didn't ask a train to put back because somebody had boarded it by mistake, and you could not ask the yacht *Aphra* to put back. If you did Jackie would think that the end of civilization had come.

Mrs. Proctor ran into her own cabin. Arthur was still sleeping heavily.

"Arthur! Arthur!" No response. Men were astounding.

She then knocked at the door of the owner's cabin. Equally no response. These males had slept brutishly through wondrous incidents and could not be roused. Mrs. Proctor flew up on deck, followed by Mrs. Draver. Yes, the fine ketch *Aphra* was at sea right enough. The staysail was well filled. The captain, unaware of calamity, was at the wheel. Various members of the crew were quietly cleaning brass. The kitchen chimney was blowing off pleasant smoke. The ship pitched very, very gently in the smooth, glittering sea. The ship had something inexorable about her movement. Cry "Stop"? You could not cry "Stop." Mrs. Proctor, nonplussed, looked behind. The little pudding-basin of Polpooe was getting smaller every moment. It was fading. It was like a historical event, receding irrevocably into the past, and never to be recalled. To see Polpooe from the moving ship was like reading about Polpooe.

Then was heard the distant sound of a siren, several times sharply repeated. The captain gazed aft. All the sailors on deck ceased work and gazed aft.

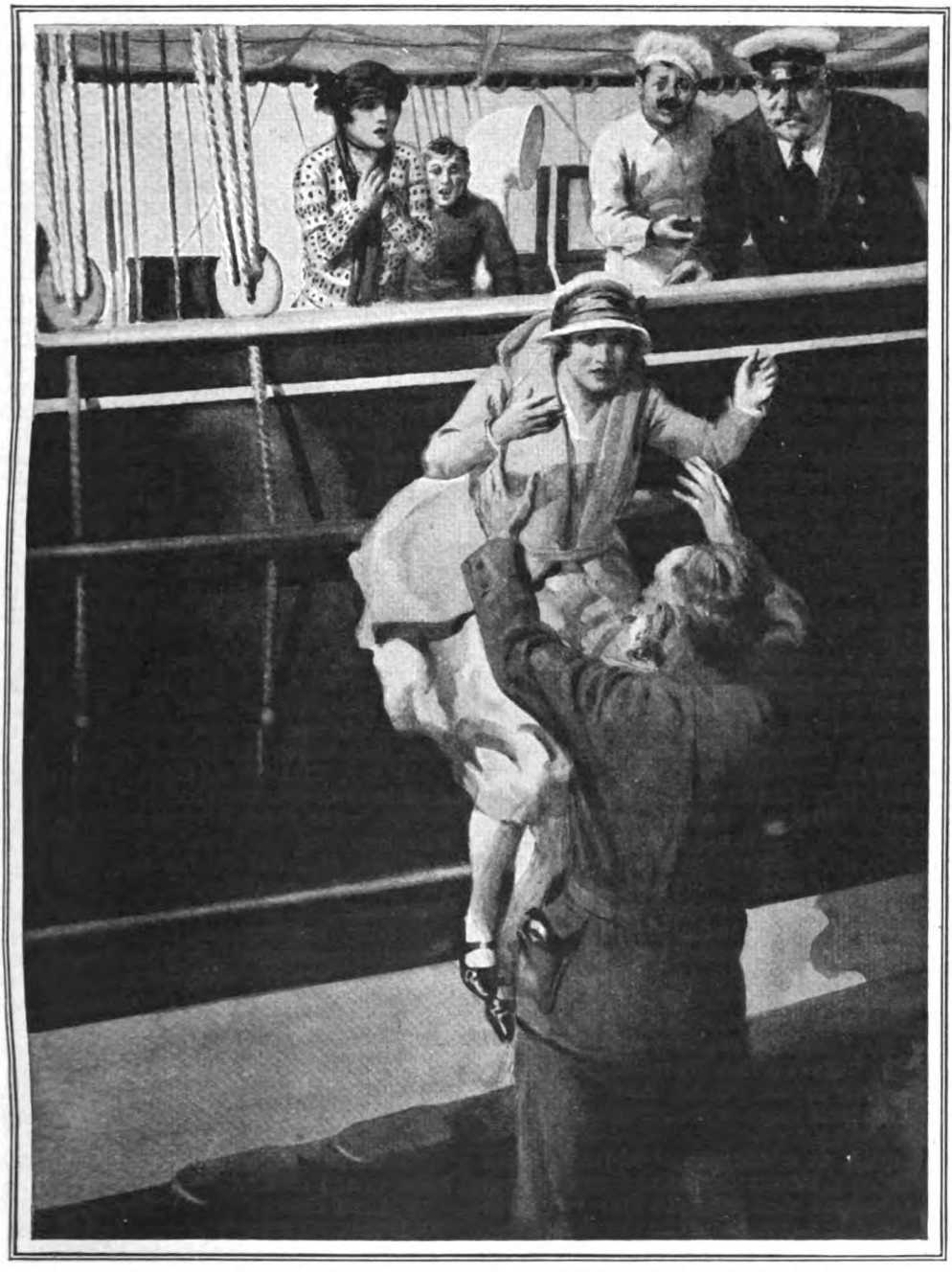
"What's the fellow making a noise about?" asked the captain.

"Hadn't you better stop, skipper?" Mrs. Proctor weakly suggested, utterly unlike herself.

"Stop'm? We can't stop. She's got the tide under her. Besides——"

At this point the captain caught sight of an unknown woman, Mrs. Draver, and was transfixed with astonishment. The look on his face was so comical that Mrs. Proctor laughed the laugh of incipient hysteria. Both stewards came on deck. The cook's white-capped head appeared at the forecastle hatch.

"That's that old coal-barge a-coming," said the captain. "If she wants us she'll soon overhaul us. She's got a motor in her enough to shake her to bits. I seed her last year."



Mrs. Draver leaped from the yacht's rail into the barge, and a hatless old man caught her by the waist.

The pursuing vessel showed a foaming prow, and was visibly growing larger and larger.

"*Leonard is in that barge!*" exclaimed Mrs. Draver, solemnly.

"Lower yer staysail!" shouted the captain.

"Lower yer staysail," repeated two deck-hands, according to ritual, and the staysail came down with a rattle.

"Hoist yer staysail!" the captain cried a few minutes later. "He looks as if he was coming alongside, and I must have steering way on her."

"Hoist yer staysail," repeated the deck-hands.

The staysail rose again. The coal-barge bore down with the ruthlessness and the inevitability of pursuing justice. Soon could be heard the murmur of the divided white water at her prow.

"Leonard's always watching in the garden with his glasses," said Mrs. Draver, clasping Mrs. Proctor's hand. "He saw me come on board and the boat go away, and then he saw the yacht move off and he got excited. Hence the coal-barge. He'd have chartered a steamer if he couldn't have got anything less."

"But surely——" Mrs. Proctor began.

"Yes, of course, infant," Mrs. Draver cut her short. "But, you see, Leonard doesn't think. He feels."

The coal-barge, slackening speed, drew alongside. There was a shock and a great pother. The captain of the yacht *Aphra* bawled something in the confusion to the grimy steerer of the coal-barge, and the steerer of the coal-barge bawled back to the captain of the yacht *Aphra*.

"Hi! Look out!" the captain almost screamed.

But Mrs. Draver had leaped from the yacht's rail into the vile depths of the barge; and a hatless old man had caught her by the waist and was holding her, and also kissing her.

"Well," muttered the captain. "That was a fine set-out, that was!"

The coal-barge sheered off, and in half a minute was making for Polpooe. Mrs. Proctor felt lonely, for Mrs. Draver seemed to have quite forgotten her.

"Alb," said the captain, gloomily, to the mate. "Have a look there—see how much he's done to our paint. And swab down again here. He's left half his coal-dust behind him."

Lastly, at a distance of a quarter of a mile, Mrs. Draver turned and waved from the barge. And Mrs. Proctor waved in reply. She was smiling, and she was crying, too—not from grief at parting with her beloved friend, but from another emotion. Might it be envy, or something nobler?

VI.

IT rained softly in the afternoon. Arthur Proctor took the opportunity to have more repose in his cabin. Mrs. Proctor sat in the saloon with Jackie, listening to the gentle patter of the rain on the deck above. The two men had not heard the whole truth about Elizabeth's adventure of the morning; they had heard only part of it—the mere physical events of it. Tikky had not even begun to relate the rest, because she felt the hopelessness of trying to convey its significance to those comfortable, lazy, teasing, sardonic males. They laughed good-naturedly and quizzically at what they did hear. How could they possibly understand?—the one a nice, heavy husband, sunk in ease and satisfaction, the other the lowest of created beings, a bachelor profoundly decent and indifferent to women.

Jackie and Tikky were discussing housekeeping, upon which Jackie justifiably regarded himself as an authority. They sat close together; she was holding his hand—in a friendly, affectionate way, for she liked Jackie while despising him. Arthur, having wakened, and feeling the need of tea for his refreshment, strolled into the saloon.

"Hullo!" he murmured. "Here you are!" Tikky did not move—even her hand. Presently she went into their cabin. Arthur followed her and carefully shut the door. She looked at him and waited.

"I say, Tikky," said he, "I think I shall have to speak to Jackie."

"Oh, what about?" cried Tikky, as it were hopefully.

"His confounded Ceylon tea. He really ought to give us China."

She stamped her foot impatiently, quite recovering her regular form of a very capricious, unpredictable young woman.

"Puh!" she exploded. "Is that all?"

A little later she said: "Arthur, were you ever jealous?"

"About you?"

"Yes."

"Certainly not. Why should I be?" he asked, with perfect tranquillity. "Why do you ask?"

"I won't tell you—you wouldn't even know what I meant."

"Oh, all right!"

"It isn't all right," Tikky asserted, contradictory. And she thought of Elizabeth eternally watched and longed for, and she sighed.

ANOTHER "Q.Q." STORY

THE GREAT MALLETT CASE

BY

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN

ILLUSTRATED BY S SEYMOUR LUCAS

THE telephone-bell rang upon Mr. Quentin Quayne's desk. He picked up the receiver.

"Yes?—Who?—Dr. Tranter?—I don't know him.—No appointment, is there?" It was evidently a query emanating from the outer office. "Never mind—I can give him ten minutes. Show him in, will you?—And let me know when Mr. Sherwood calls."

A minute or so later a clerk introduced a middle-aged, greyish, clean-shaven man in conventionally correct West-end attire. Even without the prefix to his name, there was something about him which instantly suggested the moderately-successful G.P., owing that success more to a pleasant "bedside manner" than to any great distinction of character or intellect, but likeable enough withal. Just then he had not only the strained, worried look common enough in new clients of the Q.Q. Agency; he exhibited a nervous diffidence in himself unusual in members of the medical profession. Looking at him from my desk, I could feel that he half-regretted coming to lay his troubles, whatever they were, before us.

"Mr. Quayne," he said, at once taking the plunge, "I want your advice—upon a matter which I am afraid you will consider absurdly fantastic."

"In this office we beware of premature verdicts, Dr. Tranter," said the Chief, "and we are slow to ridicule the apparently absurd. What is the matter on which you want advice?"

"It is—absurd as it sounds—a dream—a singularly vivid dream," replied Dr. Tranter, reassured a little. "A dream—and its sequel. I will economize your valuable time and come to my story at once. For four successive nights I have dreamed, with all the vividness of an actual occurrence, that during the night the telephone-bell at the side of my bed wakened me with an urgent call. The address of this call was as vivid in my dream as everything else—it was 39, Carlyon Mansions. In my dream I dressed at once, looked at my watch, found it marked 1.30 a.m., went downstairs, let myself out of the house without disturbing anyone (I ought, perhaps, to have said I am a bachelor), and walked along the deserted streets to Carlyon Mansions, which is a recently-erected block of expensive flats about a quarter of a mile distant. I ought to add that, although I have many times passed Carlyon Mansions, I have never had a patient living in them. I have made quite sure of that by looking through my case-book.

"In my dream the street-door was half-open and a maid-servant stood at it, evidently expecting me. She verified my name, and led me up three flights of stairs, the lift not working at that hour. We entered the flat, and I was received by a tall, dark, clean-shaven man, in evening dress. He was, perhaps, thirty-five years of age. He was apparently in a state of acute emotional distress, and yet I had an odd

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feeling that his distress was not quite genuine. There was something, too, about his saturnine personality that gave one an instinctive feeling of repulsion.

"He told me that he had been out for the evening with a party of friends, finishing up at a night-club, and that he had returned at something past one o'clock to find his wife dead in bed. 'I ought not to have left her,' I remember him saying in tones of anguished remorse. 'Her heart has always been weak—and it was because she did not feel well that she did not accompany me this evening.' The very accent of the man's voice is as vivid in my memory as though I had indeed spoken with him in real life.

"He led me into an adjoining room, and there in the bed was the white and motionless figure of a singularly beautiful young woman. I remember clearly the way her auburn hair splashed out on the white pillow. I went across to her and saw at a glance that she was in fact dead. I applied —in my dream—all the usual tests, of course. She had been dead, I judged, for about three hours. There was no sign of injury, no apparent symptom of disease, no explanation of the death except the hypothesis suggested by the husband—heart-failure.

"I remember agreeing with him in this, and I distinctly recall his voice—I can almost hear it now—saying: 'That's sufficient for a certificate, of course?' And then, in my dream, I absolutely refused to give such a certificate. I said that, although there were apparently no suspicious circumstances and I alleged none, it was impossible for me to give a certificate of the natural death of a person with whom I was unacquainted, when, as in this case, there were no identifiable symptoms. I said that it was my duty to inform the coroner and arrange for an autopsy. At this my dream-acquaintance protested violently, told me that he could not bear the thought of his much-loved wife being cut about after death, and by every sort of argument and persuasion tried to alter my decision. But I was quite definitely obdurate—in fact, in real life I should, of course, refuse to grant a certificate in such circumstances —and finally, with an exasperated shrug of his shoulders, he was forced to accept the prospect of an inquest.

"Resigned to the inevitable, he became quite unexpectedly pleasant, and as I passed through the adjoining room towards the outer door my dream-acquaintance offered me a whisky-and-soda. I remember definitely refusing it—and then my dream ends suddenly—as suddenly as if a curtain came down on it.

"For four successive nights—five, including a fragmentary version of it during my uneasy sleep last night—I have dreamed that dream precisely and identically the same in every particular. I am awakened by the telephone—I go to 39, Carlyon Mansions —the maid-servant is waiting at the door for me—I am received by the saturnine man in evening dress—I examine the dead body of the auburn-haired woman in the bed—I am pressed to give a death-certificate, which I refuse—I decline a whisky-and-soda —and the dream ends suddenly with my waking up as if staring at a black curtain —never does my dream take me back to my house." Dr. Tranter looked a trifle apprehensively towards Mr. Quayne, who had sat listening with a patient interest. "I trust I am not wearying you with all this—it is the sequel which makes it interesting."

"Go on, then, Dr. Tranter," said Mr Quayne, encouragingly. "Let us have the sequel."

"THE nightly recurrence of this singularly vivid dream obsessed my waking hours to such an extent that yesterday I could not resist the impulse to walk round to Carlyon Mansions. I did not use the lift, but walked up the three flights to No. 39, and each step of the staircase I recognized as though I had, in fact, been there before. At the door of No. 39 I hesitated a moment, and then, giving way to my curiosity, I rang the bell. A maid-servant appeared—*and she was the same maid-servant* who, in my dream, had waited for me at the half-open street-door! I was so astonished that for a moment I did not know what to say. At last I managed to stammer out the first plausible thing that came into my head, and I asked if Mr. Robinson lived there. 'No, sir,' replied the maid; 'this is Mr. Mallett's flat,' and with that she closed the door in my face—not, however, before I had caught a glimpse of a room I could have sworn I recognized."

"Did the maid-servant show any sign of recognition?" asked Mr. Quayne.

"Beyond that she stared at me rather curiously, I cannot say that she did," replied Dr. Tranter. "Altogether bewildered by this verification in real life of some of the features of my dream, I descended the stairs and discreetly questioned the lift-attendant. And you can imagine how startled I was when he told me that Mrs. Mallett had died in the early morning of the 9th of April, and been buried three days later!"

"We are now at the eighteenth," commented Mr. Quayne, sententiously. "Your dreams therefore commenced on the thirteenth. A very curious story."

"I am by no means a superstitious man," went on Dr. Tranter. "Few doctors are.

But I confess this extraordinary coincidence of my dream with an event in real life otherwise quite unknown to me has disturbed me terribly. I cannot help wondering if, after all, it is not some strange supernatural intimation to me that a crime has been committed. What do you think? Should I or should I not go to the police with my story? I had already, in fact, determined to do so, when I reflected that they would probably dismiss it as an hallucination—and then, in the middle of last night, I suddenly thought of you—my friend, Dr. Williamson, has often spoken of you. What is your advice, Mr. Quayne?"

"H'm!" Q. Q. sat back and thought for a moment. "You have perhaps hit the exact word, Dr. Tranter—hallucination. You may conceivably have heard, without noticing it, some mention of the death of Mrs. Mallett—and then subsequently your subconsciousness dramatized it for you in a dream. As for recognizing the maid and the staircase, such hallucinatory false memories are not uncommon——"

AT that moment the telephone upon the desk rang sharply. Mr. Quayne spoke into the instrument.

"Yes?—Mr. Sherwood?—Bring him along in two minutes." He turned to Dr. Tranter. "I should like to analyse this a little more closely before giving you any definite advice, doctor. At this moment I am interrupted by an important appointment already arranged for. But if you are not pressed for time and could wait in the adjoining room for a few minutes, I should be very glad to return to your decidedly strange story."

"By all means, Mr. Quayne," said Dr. Tranter, rising from his chair. "I have disposed of my urgent cases for this morning and I can very well await your convenience. I feel I can't go from here without having come to a definite decision."

"Very well, then," agreed the Chief. "Mr. Creighton, will you see that Dr. Tranter has some periodicals to interest him for the next quarter of an hour?"

I installed the doctor in the anteroom and returned to see the Chief shaking hands with a sharp-featured, intelligent-looking little man who I deduced was Mr. Sherwood—of, as I subsequently learned, the firm of Sherwood and Evans, very important lawyers in the City. Mr. Sherwood and the Chief were evidently old acquaintances.

"Well, Sherwood," said Mr. Quayne, as his visitor seated himself in the chair just vacated by Dr. Tranter. "What's the trouble?"

"We don't know if it *is* trouble yet, Q. Q.," replied Mr. Sherwood. "That's why we've come to you first as usual, before going to the police." He extracted some documents from an attaché-case he had carried. "We are primarily representing the Comet Insurance Company, but four other companies are also concerned in the matter. The trouble is, briefly, this. Four months ago a Mrs. Lucy Mallett, aged twenty-four, of 39, Carlyon Mansions——"

"Of *where?*" interrupted the Chief, in surprise.

"39, Carlyon Mansions," said Mr. Sherwood. "Why? Do you know anything about it?"

"Never mind," said Mr. Quayne. "Go on."

"Well, on the 5th of January, to be precise, Mrs. Lucy Mallett insured her life with the Comet Insurance Company for twenty thousand pounds. She was examined by the company's own doctor and passed as a first-class life. On the 9th of April Mrs. Mallett died suddenly—of heart-failure. The company received notification of the death and a claim for the sum assured from Rogers and Rogers, a most reputable firm of solicitors, acting for the executor, Mr. Mallett. The claim would undoubtedly have been paid without question, had it not been discovered, by a quite fortuitous conversation between the medical officer of the Comet Company and the medical officer of the Prometheus Company, that a similar insurance had also been effected with the Prometheus people and claimed from them by the same solicitors. Being a large sum to pay so soon after the insurance was effected, further inquiry was made among other companies—and it was found that Mrs. Mallett's life was insured for five sums of twenty thousand each—a hundred thousand in all—in five different companies. Now this may be quite a *bonâ-fide* case. People do insure their lives for large sums and die with unexpected quickness. On the other hand, as—we understand—Mr. Mallett is the sole beneficiary under Mrs. Mallett's will, he had a distinct inducement to hasten the course of nature. Before paying the claim, we want you to investigate Mr. Mallett a little—and tell us whether you think we should communicate with the police. You understand, for their own reputation, the insurance companies do not want the disagreeable complications of a police inquiry if the case is genuine and the death natural. If it is not, of course——" Mr. Sherwood broke off with a significant gesture.

"Quite," agreed Mr. Quayne. "The death-certificate is in order, I suppose?"

"Perfectly," said Mr. Sherwood. "Here it is." He selected a piece of paper from the bunch of documents in his hand. "We have not yet communicated with the medical man who gave it. But it appears quite straightforward."

Mr. Quayne took it, lifted his eyebrows at it, and turned to me.

"Mr. Creighton," he said, "will you ask Dr. Tranter to step this way?"

I brought the doctor back into the room. Mr. Quayne held out the death-certificate to him.

"Ah, Dr. Tranter," he said. "Do you recognize that signature?"

Dr. Tranter took the paper, glanced at the signature.

"Yes," he replied, promptly. "Of course I do—it is my own."

"Do you see to whom that certificate refers?"

The doctor looked at the paper again and threw up his head with a startled exclamation.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated. "I hadn't noticed!—Mrs. Lucy Mallett, of 39, Carlyon Mansions!—Mr. Quayne, this signature is a forgery. I swear I never gave it. I never attended that person. But—but——" he stared round at us all, utterly bewildered, "what an extraordinary coincidence! My dream! How did I dream that I was called to this poor woman? Mr. Quayne," he added, with an almost frightened solemnity, "my mysterious clairvoyance was well-founded. We are on the trace of a terrible crime!"

"I think it very probable," said Q. Q., getting up from his chair. "I shall be glad if both you gentlemen will accompany me round to Scotland Yard." He went quickly across the room to where his coat and hat hung on the wall. "We must get the police to arrange for an immediate exhumation of Mrs. Mallett's body."

TWO days later, at that particularly eerie midnight hour which the police choose for such necessarily discreet operations, I stood with Mr. Quentin Quayne, Dr. Tranter, Mr. Sherwood, a police doctor, an undertaker, and Sebright of Scotland Yard in the unnerving gloom of a cemetery where the tombstones glimmered like ghosts under the rustling trees. In front of us, uncanny in the scanty yellow light of their lanterns, a couple of gravediggers threw the earth in shovelfuls from the dark pit in which they were already shoulder deep. Behind us was the pile of dead flowers and withered wreaths which had covered Mrs. Mallett's grave. We heard the thud of their spades on the wood of the coffin. I could not help shuddering. Personally, I felt a party to a ghoulish act of sacrilege, encompassed, in that black night, by the hostility of disturbed and vengeful spirits.

My companions were much more coolly business-like, however, and in a very short time we stood in the comparatively cheerful electric light of the cemetery mortuary, watching the undertaker deftly unscrewing the lid of the coffin. He lifted it off, and we all stepped forward—on my part, I confess, with some reluctance to come to close quarters with the mouldering human body inside. But—and there was one cry of astonishment from us all as we realized the fact—*there was no body!* There were only a few heavy pieces of lead, wrapped in new cotton sheeting, in the bottom of the coffin.

"What do you make of that, Q. Q.?" said Sebright, with a significant look. "Pretty clear evidence, eh? He couldn't risk an exhumation and an autopsy, and he's made away with the body."

"H'm!" The Chief pondered a moment, and then turned to the undertaker. "You put the corpse into the coffin yourself, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. And screwed it down. Jones, who usually works with me, helped me. He'll corroborate all I say. The poor lady died early morning of the ninth, Mr. Mallett came along to my place about ten o'clock that day and ordered the funeral—highest class, though only one carriage following. I went along to Carlyon Mansions at, say, eleven to measure the body. We took the coffin there at nine o'clock evening of the tenth. And the funeral was twelve o'clock morning of the twelfth. The Reverend Brown officiated, Church of England, and the only mourners was the lady's husband and her father, a very nice white-bearded old gentleman—very visibly affected, sir."

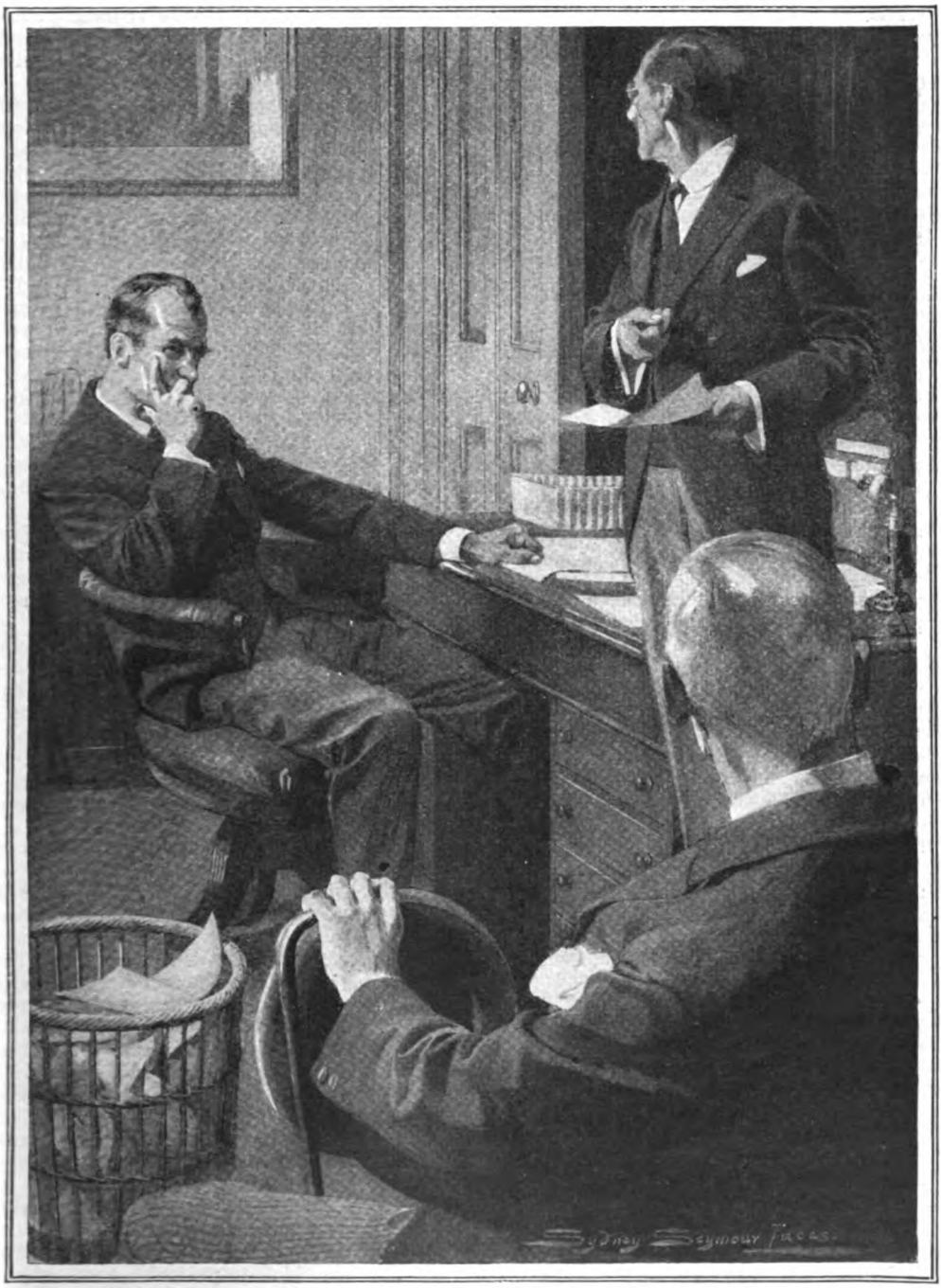
"And the coffin, when you came to remove it for the funeral, had not apparently been tampered with?"

"No, sir. Of course, such a thing never entered my head, sir."

"Naturally." Mr. Quayne turned to examine the interior of the coffin.

It contained absolutely no real clue—the new sheeting and the lumps of lead might have come from anywhere—but everyone put forward his theory as to the why and how of what had happened as we walked through the gloom of the cemetery to where the lights of a couple of cars awaited us. Sebright, Dr. Tranter, Sherwood, and myself shared the Chief's spacious limousine. Mr. Quayne summed up the position for us with a finality that left nothing more to be said, as we whirred homeward.

"Let us beware of theories for the present," he said. "All we know is this: Mrs. Mallett's life was heavily insured and the beneficiary is her husband. She undoubtedly died, for—apart from the mystery of the signature on the certificate—the undertaker swears he screwed her dead body in the coffin. We open that coffin and



"Mr. Quayne, this signature is a forgery. I swear I never gave it."

there is no body. What has happened to it? It is not easy, though possible, secretly to convey a dead body out of a block of flats——"

"He might have brought it out in a trunk, and sent it off by rail somewhere, left till called for," said Sebright. "It's been done—several times. Or, of course, he

might have the body still concealed somewhere in his flat."

"Either of your hypotheses may be correct, Sebright," agreed the Chief, "though the first is the more probable. I have a strong suspicion that Mr. Mallett is not only a scoundrel, but a very clever one. He is not likely to keep such damning evidence where it might be found. The immediate point is—have you sufficient grounds for a warrant for his arrest?"

Sebright pondered a moment.

"No," he replied. "But I have sufficient to apply for a search-warrant for his premises."

"Then I advise you to apply for it at once," said the Chief. "We must act quickly before he takes fright and absconds. And I think a little personal cross-examination of the gentleman—taken off his guard, if possible—is indicated. Therefore, I suggest to you, Sherwood, that you telephone him early to-morrow morning and make an appointment to call at his flat at eleven o'clock to discuss payment of the insurance claims. Sebright, who can get a search-warrant by half-past ten, and I will accompany you."

"I should like to be of the party, if I may," put in Dr. Tranter. "I am to a certain extent involved—and I should like to know how he forged my signature so exactly. But why he should have selected my signature, of all others, beats me. The whole thing, in fact, bewilders me—my dream and this empty coffin——"

He was interrupted by Sebright violently slapping his own thigh.

"That's it!" ejaculated Sebright. "We'll run him in on the preliminary charge of forging your signature, Dr. Tranter. That gives us a hold on the fellow. By all means come with us. We'll confront him with your denial of it."

It was finally arranged that Dr. Tranter, having attended his more urgent cases on the morning round, should call for us at 39, Carlyon Mansions, as soon after eleven o'clock as possible.

JUST before eleven the next morning the four of us were speeding, in the Chief's car, as fast as the traffic would allow us, towards Carlyon Mansions. It struck the hour as we went up in the lift.

A maid-servant, very prim and spick-and-span, opened the door to us, and ushered us into a well-furnished room. My heart thumped as she went to apprise Mr. Mallett of our presence. Mr. Quayne's eyes roved keenly about the room, taking in every object in it. Sebright went to the window and glanced out to see whether any of the plain-clothes men he had, by precaution, placed in the vicinity were visible. I saw him make a slight signal with his hand. Mr. Sherwood sat nervously drumming with his fingers on his knee.

We had not long to wait. A tall, dark, clean-shaven man, dressed in mourning-black, and perhaps thirty-five years of age, entered the room. There was something curiously saturnine in the expression of his black-browed eyes and the twist of his thin lipped mouth. I was startled to recognize, unmistakably, the dream-man that Dr. Tranter had described to us.

The solicitor rose to his feet.

"My name is Sherwood," he explained.

Mr. Mallett inclined his head politely without offering his hand.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Sherwood," he said. "And these other gentlemen?"

"These gentlemen are also interested in the matter," replied the solicitor. "They represent the other insurance companies concerned."

It was a little fiction we had agreed upon as necessary. He introduced us by the names we had invented for the occasion. I thought I saw a little twitch on Mr. Mallett's somewhat sinister features at the mention of the "other companies"—if he had spread his insurance to minimize suspicion, it must have been unwelcome to him to learn that the five companies were comparing notes and acting in concert—but he made no comment, beyond inviting us to be seated. If he were a criminal, he was decidedly a cool hand. I could not detect the slightest embarrassment in his manner.

"You have come to settle the claims on my poor wife's policies, I presume?" he said, as he sat down himself. He spoke in the most natural matter-of-fact voice. "But I do not know why you come to me. The companies have been informed that my solicitors, Messrs. Rogers and Rogers, are in charge of the estate. Would it not have been more regular to have dealt with them?"

"It would," replied Sherwood. "But we wanted a little personal conversation with you. The companies are not quite satisfied on certain points."

"I shall be happy to answer any questions," said the young man, coolly. "Pray proceed."

"There is the little matter of insurable interest," said Mr. Quayne, taking up the interrogatory. "Are we to understand that the late Mrs. Mallett paid the premiums on these insurances out of her own personal funds?"

"Certainly. My wife was in receipt of a large annual allowance from her father, Mr. Hilton Brand. She had—I regret to say I laughed at it—a premonition that she would not live long. And she insisted on

taking out these policies immediately after our marriage in order that—as she absurdly said—I should have some compensation for losing her. I need hardly say that nothing could be compensation for such a loss." There was a convincing sincerity in Mr. Mallett's tone.

"The insurances were taken out on the 5th of January," pursued Mr. Quayne. "You were not long married then?"

"At the St. Martin's Register Office on the 2nd of January," replied the young man. "I can show you the certificate." He rose, went to a desk across the room, unlocked it, took out a sheet of paper, and handed it to us. It was passed round from hand to hand—the certificate of the marriage of Lucy Brand, spinster, twenty-four years, with Geoffrey Mallett, bachelor, thirty-six, at the St. Martin's Register Office, on January 2nd of that year. It was undoubtedly authentic. We returned it to him, and he locked it up again.

"Can you prove that Mrs. Mallett paid those premiums from her own funds?" asked Mr. Quayne.

"Easily. I can produce her banker's pass-book. You will find the entries are beyond doubt. Also, if it will satisfy you, Mr. Hilton Brand, her father, is in the flat at this moment, and he will tell you that he made his daughter an allowance of eight thousand a year."

"We should, in fact, be glad of a word with that gentleman," said Mr. Quayne.

"By all means—excuse me for a moment."

The young man went out of the room. We all looked at one another.

"If he tries to leave the building, he will be arrested as he goes out," remarked Sebright. "I have a plain-clothes man talking to the lift-attendant."

"He doesn't know that we know the coffin was empty," said Q. Q., grimly. "And he *does* look to us to get his hundred thousand. No fear of his running away."

THERE need have been no fear of it. In a minute or so the young man returned with an almost awesomely respectable old gentleman, patriarchal with a white beard half-way down his waistcoat and quite ambassadorial in the courteous dignity of his manner. Mr. Mallett introduced him as his father-in-law, Mr. Hilton Brand, and I recognized the undertaker's description of the only other mourner at Mrs. Mallett's funeral.

Mr. Hilton Brand precisely corroborated his son-in-law's statements, once or twice furtively bringing a black-bordered handkerchief to his eye as he did so. He allowed his daughter eight thousand a year, he said, and it was a whim of hers to insure her life for this large amount. She paid the premiums from her private banking account. Questioned as to his own position, he stated that he was in residence at the Savoy Hotel, and that he had only recently returned from South America, where he had been to look after his business interests. The old man had every appearance of being perfectly genuine. Having answered the queries put to him, he withdrew—with a courteous "Good morning, gentlemen"—discreetly leaving us to our business with his son-in-law.

That young man turned to us somewhat scornfully.

"Well, are you satisfied now, gentlemen?" he asked.

"Not quite," replied Mr. Quayne. "Mrs. Mallett was medically passed as a first-class life early in January. When did you first notice symptoms of heart-trouble?"

The young man reflected a moment.

"About the end of February."

"And was she treated by a doctor?"

"Yes. By Dr. Hamilton, of Mortimer Street."

"Then why did you not call that doctor to certify the death?"

"I tried to. When I returned home late that night, and found my poor wife lying dead, I immediately telephoned to Dr. Hamilton's house. A servant informed me that Dr. Hamilton had that day been knocked down by a motor-bus and killed. They suggested Dr. Tranter as the nearest doctor. I at once rang up Dr. Tranter. He came, examined the body, and gave me the necessary certificate of natural death. Rogers and Rogers should have sent it to you."

We all glanced at one another.

"Are you aware," put in Sebright, impetuously, "that Dr. Tranter disowns the signature on that certificate?"

The young man stared at us.

"That is absurd!" he said. "Dr. Tranter signed it in my presence." He made a movement towards the telephone on a side-table. "Now I understand why you are making these inquiries." His manner was vivaciously indignant. "The simplest solution is to ring up Dr. Tranter and ask him to come round here at once."

"It is unnecessary to telephone," said Mr. Quayne. "We asked Dr. Tranter to meet us here. He should arrive at any moment." Just as he spoke, I heard a faint ring at the outer door. "There he is, I think."

I confess that it was with a thrill of expectation that I saw Dr. Tranter enter the room. We all stood up. Now the mask was going to be torn off this plausible young man!

Mr. Mallett went straight across to the doctor and gripped him warmly by the hand.

"Ah, Dr. Tranter!" he said, heartily. "You are the very man we want. It seems there is some little doubt about my poor wife's death-certificate. I suggest to you that you remember the circumstances perfectly."

The doctor blinked for a moment, and stared round at us.

"Of course I do!" he exclaimed. "I remember the circumstances as plainly as possible. I was called in the night to Mrs. Mallett. I came here, found life was already extinct for three hours, learned that Dr. Hamilton—whose death I had just heard of—had been attending the deceased, made a careful examination of the body, diagnosed the characteristic symptoms of heart-failure, and gave a certificate to that effect."

We heard him in utter stupefaction. The doctor seemed quite unconscious of the amazing *volte face* he was performing. His words came swift, unembarrassed, and positive.

"But," ejaculated Mr. Sherwood, "you told us distinctly that you did nothing of the sort—that you never came here at all!"

"Except in a dream," murmured Q. Q.

Dr. Tranter stared round again at us, frankly bewildered now.

"What?" His brow went puzzled for a moment. "So I did," he said. "So I did. It is most extraordinary—most extraordinary. I can only put it down to some inexplicable aberration of memory—I have been working very hard of late. But I remember the whole incident plainly enough now. I certainly came here and satisfied myself as to the cause of Mrs. Mallett's death and unhesitatingly gave a certificate."

"That disposes of the forgery warrant," whispered Sebright to Mr. Sherwood. He turned to Dr. Tranter. "You are aware, I suppose, doctor, that you expose yourself to very grave censure for giving a certificate without previous knowledge of the deceased?"

Dr. Tranter blinked at him.

"I can only repeat that I was satisfied—perfectly satisfied," he said.

"There was not the slightest symptom of foul play?"

"None whatever. I was amply satisfied that Mrs. Mallett expired quite naturally in her bed about three hours before the death was discovered. I take full responsibility for giving that certificate." He could not have been more emphatically explicit.

"H'm!" grunted Mr. Quayne. We all turned to him, but it was his only comment.

"Now are you quite satisfied, gentlemen?" said Mr. Mallett. Quiet though were his tones, I thought I detected a sneering satisfaction in his sardonic smile.

"No," said Sebright, abruptly. "Excuse me, Q. Q., but I take charge now." He turned again to the young man. "My name is Sebright, of Scotland Yard. Last night Mrs. Mallett's coffin was exhumed under a Home Office order—and the coffin was found to be empty. Perhaps you will be good enough to tell us what has happened to the body?"

IF ever startled astonishment was genuine and unaffected, it was that young man's.

"What!" he stammered. "My wife's coffin—empty? Good God! Somebody must have been at the grave before you! But who could have got at it? What for? Surely the days of graveyard ghouls are past!" He covered his face with his hands. "My wife! My poor wife! To desecrate your grave! Surely they could have let you lie in peace! My God—how awful!" He looked up at us almost fiercely. "Well, then, Mr. Whoever-you-are, of Scotland Yard, I trust you will take immediate steps to discover the perpetrators of this ghastly outrage. Believe me, I shall not allow the matter to rest here. The villains who interfered with my poor wife's remains must be discovered and brought to justice—you understand that?"

Sebright eyed him keenly.

"Young man," he said, "bluster is no use with me. I hold a search-warrant for this flat, and I am going to exercise it; here and now."

The young man looked at him.

"You—you mean to suggest that it was I who took my wife's body from her coffin?" he said, in a tone of horror. "But for what conceivable purpose?"

"I suggest nothing—at present," replied Sebright, curtly. "All I say is that Mrs. Mallett died—Dr. Tranter here certifies it—that the body was removed from the coffin before the funeral—and that I am going to search this place for it."

Mr. Mallett shrugged his shoulders.

"I cannot prevent you, I suppose," he said. "But please note that I register an emphatic protest against this outrage."

Sebright went to the window and made a signal to his men below.

"Will you assist us, Quayne?" he asked, as he returned to us.

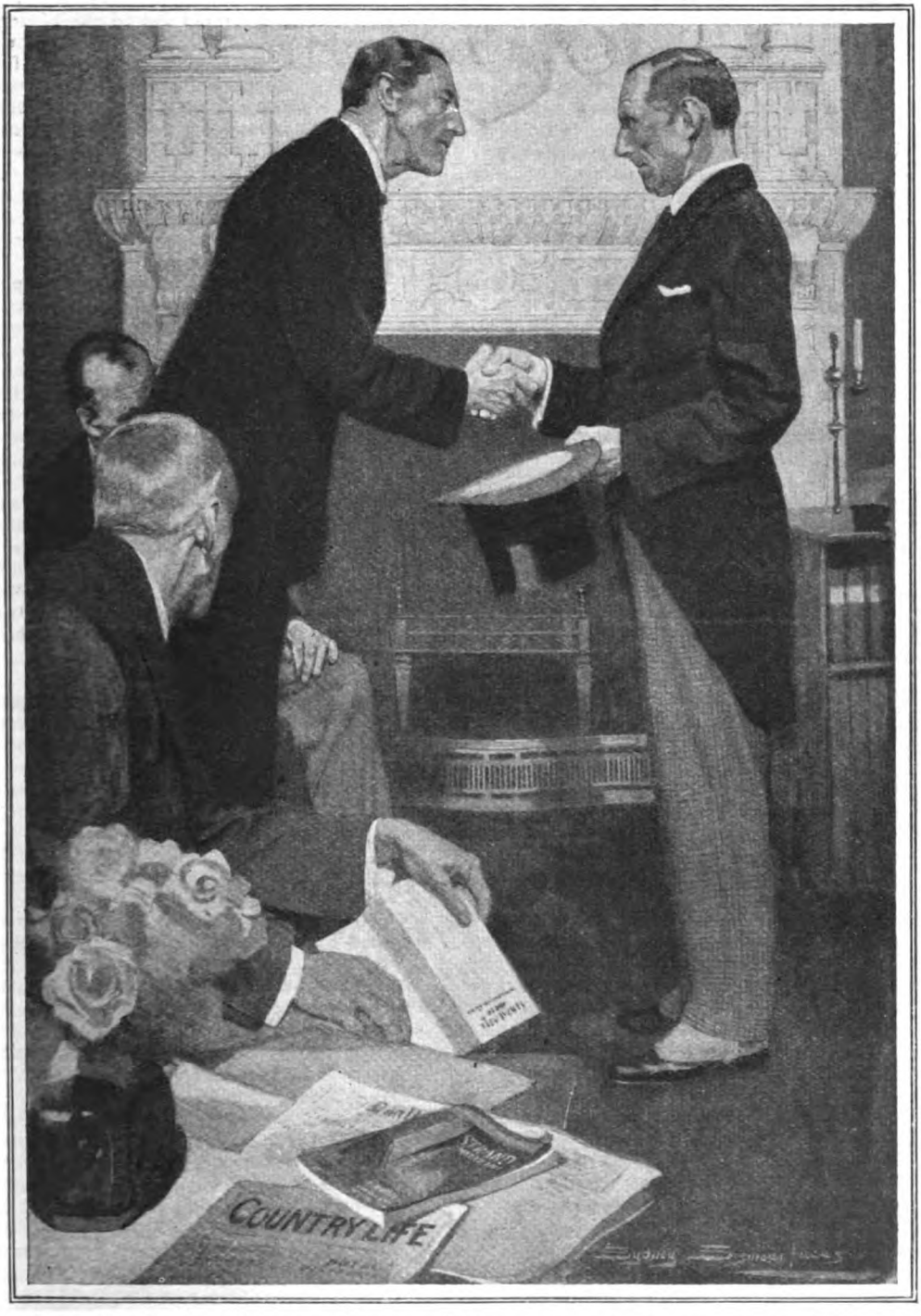
Mr. Quayne looked at his watch. "No. I've got some important things waiting for me. I'll leave it to you, Sebright."

Mr. Mallett interposed with the vivacity of a happy discovery.

"Excuse me," he said. "Are you Mr. Quentin Quayne, of the Q. Q. Agency?"

"The same." Q. Q. smiled at him.

"Then, Mr. Quayne, I shall be extremely



"Ah, Dr. Tranter!" he said, heartily. "You are the very man we want. It seems there is some little doubt about my poor wife's death-certificate."

obliged to you if you will consider me as your client. I have more confidence in you than in the official police "—he sent a contemptuous glance towards Sebright—"and if I may entrust to you the task of discovering the ghouls who desecrated my wife's grave, you will be doing me a greater service than I can say. Name your own fee."

Truly, if this young man were a criminal, he had consummate nerve!

Mr. Quayne sent him a swift, keen glance.

"By all means, Mr. Mallett," he said, easily. "I'll do my best for you. But to-day I'm afraid my time is booked to the last minute. Can you call at my office to-morrow?"

"Certainly. Perhaps you will telephone a time convenient to you? I will make it convenient to myself." He turned to Sherwood. "And, Mr. Sherwood, I trust the companies you represent will see the propriety of offering me an apology at the time they settle the indisputable claims of my wife's estate upon them." With that he walked out of the room.

Mr. Quayne picked up his hat.

"Sebright," he said, in a whisper, "intercept all correspondence in and out of this flat. And I should like to see anything you get hold of."

"Trust me, Q. Q.! We'll watch him like a cat watches a mouse. You shall see any correspondence there is. And now I'm going to search this place from top to bottom—and if I find nothing here, I'll ransack every left-luggage office in the kingdom!"

OUTSIDE Carlyon Mansions, Mr. Quentin Quayne, Mr. Sherwood, Dr. Tranter, and myself formed a little group of which three members were decidedly discomfited.

"It looks as though we shall have to settle those claims, Q. Q.," said Sherwood. "We can't refuse payment just because the body happens to have disappeared from the cemetery. There's no proof whatever that young Mallett had anything to do with that. In fact, I am beginning to believe we have done that young man a great injustice with our suspicions. I'm afraid you have put us all into a very awkward position, Dr. Tranter."

"I'm afraid I have," agreed Dr. Tranter, miserably. "It was a most amazing lapse of memory. I can't explain it even to myself. But I remember everything clearly now—at least, I—I think I do." His voice tailed off almost to an inaudibility that was completed by the noise of a passing vehicle.

The Chief's eyes rested on him for a moment as he opened the door of his waiting limousine.

"Come along to my office, doctor, will you?" he said, in a kindly tone. "For your own sake, we must get to the bottom of this."

Dr. Tranter made no objection, and the next minute the four of us were speeding back towards Piccadilly Circus. None of us spoke. Mr. Quayne sat staring out of the car with the unseeing eyes of a man deep in thought, and the rest of us respected the silence of his meditations. Only when, at Piccadilly Circus, Mr. Sherwood left us to return to his own office did he utter a word.

"Don't be in too great a hurry to pay those claims, Sherwood," he said, with a grim little smile. "We haven't quite done with Mr. Mallett yet."

A little later, in Mr. Quentin Quayne's large private room, Dr. Tranter reiterated miserably his inability to understand his extraordinary lapse of memory. The more he thought about it the more wretchedly distressed he became.

"You don't think my brain is failing me, Mr. Quayne, do you?" he said, desperate at the enigma he offered to himself. "Even now my mind seems fogged—in fact, it is reverting to the condition in which I first came here. While I was in that flat I seemed to remember, with absolute certainty, all the circumstances of examining Mrs. Mallett's dead body and giving the certificate. It is, incidentally, quite true that Dr. Hamilton was killed by a motor-bus on April the 9th. But now—now all that seems unreal again. I could almost swear that I had never been in that place before—except in my dream. Mr. Quayne"—he looked at the Chief with scared eyes—"it frightens me! If—if my mind is giving way, it means the end of my practice—it means ruin to me!"

Q. Q. leaned back in his chair and caressed his chin with thumb and forefinger as he smiled.

"I don't think it's as bad as that, doctor," he said, reassuringly. "But let us bring all this to a focus. You undoubtedly had a very vivid dream—do you usually dream of your professional work?"

Dr. Tranter shook his head.

"Never." He was emphatic. "I never remember dreaming about a case in the whole of my experience—my dream-images are always those of escape from my work, travel, fishing, sometimes golf. But, in fact, I dream rarely."

"Yet you dreamed this same vivid dream for four or five consecutive nights—obviously your subconsciousness was desperately trying to tell you something as soon as the obstacle of your normal workaday busy thoughts was eliminated in sleep. Let us assume that as a postulate." He looked at

him keenly for a moment. "Have you ever been hypnotized, doctor?"

Dr. Tranter hesitated a moment.

"Years ago. When I was a medical student. Some of us experimented with hypnotism. I was, I believe, a capricious subject—sometimes very good, sometimes very bad. But"—he looked in alarm at the Chief—"are you suggesting that I was hypnotized, then? Surely I could not be hypnotized without my consent?"

Mr. Quayne smiled.

"There are more ways of obtaining consent than asking for it. Let us make a few more assumptions. Let us assume that your dream recapitulated for you a real occurrence, by some means blotted from your memory. Let us assume that you were wakened by the telephone-call—that you did in fact go round to Carlyon Mansions and saw the dead body of Mrs. Mallett—and that in fact you refused—as is quite probable in the circumstances, I think you will admit—to give a certificate. In your dream Mr. Mallett protested violently at this, but was forced to accept your decision. Your dream ended abruptly, if I remember, with your refusing a whisky-and-soda. Now assume that all this actually happened. Make your dream rather than your recent memory real to your mind. Now—try and think—what happened after the refusal of the whisky-and-soda? Something must have happened. Did you go home at once?"

Dr. Tranter knitted his brows like a man searching the recesses of his mind.

"It's strange," he said at last, slowly. "I have a vague recollection—it becomes more distinct the more I dwell on it—of accepting a cigarette just as I was leaving the flat—a sort of dream-memory of it—I can't say if it's real—but, after that, everything is black. I can get nothing more. I cannot even remember how I got home. It's a most extraordinary feeling," he added, desperately. "One half of my brain seems to remember, but more and more vaguely, giving that certificate as Mr. Mallett says I did, and as my signature proves I did—the other half of my brain remembers only my dream, and to that dream the blurred memory of accepting a cigarette seems to attach itself."

Q. Q. smiled again.

"I think we can, provisionally at least, come to a decision, Dr. Tranter," he said. "You did in fact go to that flat, you did see Mrs. Mallett lying dead—and you did refuse to give a certificate. Mr. Mallett had urgent reasons for requiring that certificate and was determined to get it. At all costs he was determined to prevent an autopsy. What does he do? We will assume that he is a clever hypnotist. He has—if not to obtain your consent—to break down your resistance. He offers you a whisky-and-soda—drugged—which you refuse. He offers you a cigarette—also drugged—which you accept. Many drugs strangely facilitate hypnotism. He hypnotizes you, procures your signature—and suggests to you that you will remember nothing of the occurrence *except when and if challenged by him, in a court of law or elsewhere, when you will corroborate his story.*"

"It certainly is an explanation which covers the facts," admitted Dr. Tranter, doubtfully. "But it is very humiliating to me. I feel I shall never be able to trust my memory again."

"You will probably be wary of accepting drinks or smokes in the houses you visit," smiled the Chief. "But it is a thing that might happen to anyone. Your conscience can be quite clear."

"You suggest, then," said the doctor, "that Mallett actually murdered his wife, and to make quite sure there should be no autopsy—in the possible case of suspicions and an exhumation—removed the body from the coffin? But what has he done with it?"

"That Sebright may or may not be able to tell us."

"If your theory is correct young Mallett must be an extraordinarily cunning scoundrel."

"Of that, at least, I think we can be certain, Dr. Tranter. But now go home and make your mind easy. We will do our best to safeguard your professional reputation."

But it was a very worried and dejected man who left us.

ABOUT five o'clock that afternoon we received a packet from Sebright. It contained a note, and a black-edged letter whose envelope had been steamed open.

"*Dear Q. Q.,*" said the note. "*Search at the flat quite fruitless. Now trying the left-luggage theory. Mallett posted enclosed letter himself at 4 p.m. this afternoon. He was watched, of course, and letter recovered. Seems innocent enough. Mail it on to addressee.*—*Yours,* WM. SEBRIGHT."

The Chief read the black-edged letter, pondered it for a few moments, picked up his pencil and dotted at it, made a note or two on his blotting-pad, and then tossed it across to me.

"What do you make of that, Mr. Creighton?" he said.

Here is the letter :—

" *My dear Aunt,—*

" *Your sympathy in my shocking loss touches me deeply. I am still stunned. She was my shining star that guided me through life. My only poor consolation is that she passed away painlessly, with no shadow on our perfect if short happiness together. As you know, she shared my every thought. She was everything to me.*

" *Glad to hear you keep on the upgrade. You certainly had a very close shave from grave complications. But now I trust a new era of good health has opened for you. Margaret makes kind inquiry after you. She has begun to wonder when she will see you. She says that Sunday is an impossible day for her. No more now.*

" *Your affectionate nephew,*

" GEOFFREY."

It seemed, as Sebright said, a perfectly innocent letter, and I said so.

The Chief smiled at me.

" Really, Mr. Creighton, for an ex-War Office counter-espionage officer, you ought to do better than that. That letter contains one of the commonest forms of cipher —the Heidel cipher, as it is called. The first paragraph is the key, and the second paragraph the message. In that first paragraph the fifth, fourteenth, seventeenth, thirtieth, thirty-sixth, forty-first, forty-seventh, forty-eighth, and fifty-second words all begin with *sh*. Any selected initial will do, but *sh* is employed here. Now read off the words similarly numbered in the second paragraph."

I did so, and, to my astonishment, read : " *Keep close grave opened inquiry begun see you Sunday.*"

" When a suspected letter contains only two paragraphs, always look well at it," commented Q. Q. grimly. " It is doubly suspicious."

I went across to him to return the letter, and picked up the envelope. It was addressed " Mrs. Hamilton, Ivy Cottage, Frendlesham, Surrey."

" Who is this person, I wonder ? " I queried.

Mr. Quayne smiled.

" She is going to give us the clue to the whole story," he said, reaching for the telephone. He spoke into it. " Will you ask Miss Satterthwaite to come here, please ? "

Miss Satterthwaite entered, tall, composed, as inscrutably beautiful as ever.

" Ah, Veronica," said the Chief. " Here is a little job for you." He related to her all we knew of the mystery of Mrs. Mallett, showed her the letter. " I want that lady brought here to-morrow, and I leave it to your wits to do it."

" Very well, Chief," replied Miss Satterthwaite. ' She shall be here."

" By the afternoon, do you think ? "

" By the afternoon, certainly."

" Good luck to you, then, Veronica. I rely on you."

Miss Satterthwaite went out of the room as composedly as though going to the most unexciting of tea-parties, and Mr. Quayne took up the telephone again, asked for a number.

" Hullo ! Is that Mr. Mallett ? Mr. Quentin Quayne speaking. Will four o'clock to-morrow afternoon suit you to go into your case ? I'm busy till then. Right. Four o'clock. Here—Piccadilly Circus. Good-bye." He put the receiver back on its rest for a moment, picked it up again, asked for another number. " Hullo, Sebright, is that you ? Yes—Q. Q. To-morrow afternoon I can present you with the solution of this Mallett business. Yes. Certain. Can you manage a quarter to four ? Bring along a pair of handcuffs. And bring that undertaker fellow with you. Good. I'll telephone Sherwood to come along also."

PUNCTUALLY at a quarter to four the next afternoon Sebright entered, accompanied by Mr. Norris, the undertaker who had buried Mrs. Mallett. Sherwood, nervous with impatience, was already there. Sebright's similar eager curiosity was not unmixed with scepticism.

" I'm still making inquiries in all the left-luggage offices, whatever surprise-packet you've got up your sleeve, Q. Q. I'm convinced the fellow has made away with his wife's body somewhere. In some cases I might have thought the death was fictitious—but in this case not only does the doctor certify death on the ninth, but the undertaker here handled the body on the ninth and tenth. People can't sham death all that time—and, besides, undertakers know dead bodies when they see them."

" Oh, the poor lady was dead enough," put in the undertaker. " Stiff and cold, she was."

" You'd recognize the body again, I suppose, Mr. Norris ? " said the Chief.

" Certainly, sir. More especially as there was a little white scar above the left temple."

" Excellent. Don't forget that scar." The telephone-bell rang. Mr. Quayne picked up the instrument. " Mr. Mallett ? Show him in, please."

" That fellow certainly has nerve," commented Sebright. " Fancy daring to call on you ! "

"He thinks he can bluff us," replied the Chief. "But you're right—he certainly has nerve. As good as I've ever met."

The next moment the dark, clean-shaven, somewhat saturnine figure of Mr. Mallett was ushered into the room.

"Ah, Mr. Mallett," said the Chief, as the young man came across towards him, "I think we've solved your little mystery for you. Sebright," he turned to the Scotland Yard official, "will you be good enough to arrest Mr. Geoffrey Mallett on a charge of conspiracy to defraud the Comet and other insurance companies of the sum of one hundred thousand pounds? Mr. Sherwood here officially lays the information."

The young man had sprung back; but Sebright—though taken almost as much by surprise as he was—was too quick for him. I also had leaped forward and assisted to hold the man while a pair of handcuffs snapped on his wrists.

"Are you sure it is not a charge of murder as well, Q. Q.?" said Sebright.

"No—not murder this time," smiled the Chief. "But arrest also Mr. Hilton Brand and all the other inmates of 39, Carlyon Mansions. They are all accomplices."

The young man had recovered his self-poise.

"What do you mean by this unwarrantable outrage?" he cried. "This is fantastic nonsense! Where is there any conspiracy to defraud? My claims are genuine enough. My wife died, was certified to be dead by a doctor, and buried by—by"—he looked round, saw Mr. Norris—"by this man here. Did you not put my wife's dead body into her coffin yourself?"

"Yes, sir, I did," replied the undertaker. "I can swear to that."

"Then what shred of evidence have you to accuse me of fraud?" demanded the young man, indignantly, of the Chief.

Mr. Quentin Quayne pressed the bell upon his desk.

"I produce the evidence," he said.

Miss Satterthwaite entered the room, leading an extremely handsome young woman whose hair was, however, not auburn, as I had half-expected, but black. She started with astonishment and alarm when she saw Mallett with the handcuffs on his wrists.

"Can you identify Mrs. Mallett, Mr. Norris?" asked the Chief.

"It is terribly like her," said the man, hesitatingly. "I'd almost say it was the ghost of the poor lady I laid stiff and cold

The young man had sprung back; but Sebright was too quick for him.

in her coffin—but the hair—the hair's different."

"Look for the scar."

The undertaker went up to the white and frightened woman, pushed the hair back from her left temple. He turned round to us.

"Yes, sir—there's the scar. It's Mrs. Mallett right enough. But"—the man's face was a study in bewilderment—"how ever in the world has she come to life again? If ever there was a dead woman, it was the one I put into that coffin!"

WHEN the prisoners were removed, and Sebright had telephoned instructions to arrest the other accomplices in this daring fraud, Sherwood echoed the undertaker's question.

"I can't make head or tail of it, Q. Q.," he said. "That was no ordinary simulation of death. It must have lasted more than forty-eight hours at least."

"It beats me also," echoed Sebright. "What was the trick? A drug?"

"No," replied the Chief. "Mr. Creighton, will you get me down Tuckey on 'Hypnotism' from the shelf there?"

I fetched the work and the Chief turned over the pages.

"Listen to this," he said, and read from the page. "'There are some authenticated cases of apparent death being produced by auto-suggestion. Braid cites a remarkable and, as he believes, thoroughly well-authenticated instance of a distinguished holy man, who, to convince the Maharajah Runjeet Singh that he possessed this power over himself, apparently died, and was laid in a sealed coffin within a vault, the entrance to which was also sealed and guarded by soldiers. After six weeks, the time appointed by himself, he was taken out of the tomb in the presence of the Rajah and of several credible witnesses, English as well as native, and found to display every appearance of death. Having been gradually revived by his own servant, the still ghastly-looking, corpse-like creature sat up and spoke, his first words being addressed to the doubting Rajah: "Do you believe me now?"*

"'The best warranted European case of the sort is that of Colonel Townshend, related as follows by Dr. Cheyne: "He could die or expire when he pleased, and yet, by an effort or somehow, he could come to life again. . . ."' And then follows the description of an experiment, with two British doctors as witnesses, on Colonel Townshend," concluded the Chief, shutting the book. "These are cases of auto-suggestion—it is fairly common in India, where the trick is called 'performing *samadh*'—but what can be done by auto-suggestion can be done much more surely by the hypnotic suggestion of another. Worked by an expert practitioner, it would be completely deceptive and much less dangerous than a drug. Only, of course," he smiled at us, "an autopsy would spoil the whole business completely—unless the man desired, in fact, to commit murder by the surgeon's hand."

"But how did you hit on this explanation?" queried Sebright.

"Mallett virtually told me himself. Do you recall his first words to Dr. Tranter?—'I suggest to you that you remember perfectly'—and then Dr. Tranter promptly contradicted all he had told us. Only hypnotic suggestion could account for the doctor's strange behaviour. It occurred to me that if Mallett was so expert a hypnotist, it might be the solution to the whole business. No doubt he had counted on the unfortunate Dr. Hamilton, prepared by attendance on the wife, to give the certificate. When, having put his wife into a cataleptic state, he found Dr. Hamilton was not available, he—for some reason or other—would not postpone the operation to another time, but tried the doctor recommended to him. If Dr. Tranter had given that certificate right away, as he might possibly have done, Mallett and his wife would long have lived very happily together on an ill-gotten hundred thousand. A very well-thought-out and plausible attempt at fraud, eh?"

* *This case is described, with medical details, by an eye-witness, Dr. McGregor, in his "History of the Sikhs," page 227.*

(*Next month: "Diamond Cut Diamond."*)

PSYCHE-
A BUNDLE OF MISCHIEF

By
Eric H. N. Gill F.Z.S.

SHE was only a baby monkey, a gleesome, fleasome little thing with curiously shrivelled and parchment-like features, and a pair of beautiful brown eyes, which gazed out on the world with the wisdom of the age.

She had been one of a motley throng which inhabited a shady mango grove fringing the shelving mud-banks of a tropical river ; a happy, care-free band, which spent a good deal of their time in raiding the surrounding village crops.

Retribution came at last, and a hundred villagers, armed with poles, collected one morning to wage war against the invaders of their maize and barley. In a few hours four bamboo cages, full of the captive revellers, were being transported on slow-moving bullock-carts to some distant destination. The one surviving member, a little week-old baby, was presented to me by the village headman with a certain amount of ceremony.

Thus began a curious companionship which lasted for nearly a year, and no friend could have been more faithful, no pal more loving or entertaining than that little brown monkey, for ever held dear in my memory by the classic name of Psyche.

For the whole of the first day she would neither eat nor drink. She just clung tenaciously to everything within reach, and bared her white teeth in abject terror when anyone approached her. Then the shadows began to lengthen, darkness followed rapidly, and the little orphan began to wail for a mother who was no longer there to cling to : a piteous, plaintive cry, haunting and yet so irresistible ; I began to feel a party to an act of cruelty unparalleled, that of separating a new-born babe from its mother.

The night was bitterly cold. I could not trust her to the mercy of my native servants. The responsibility for affording her decent accommodation was mine entirely, but that little clinging morsel was dirty, extremely dirty, and it puzzled me greatly to know what to do for her. Eventually a soiled linen bag dangling from the tent-pole gave me an idea, so, turning out all the clothes, I popped the orphan into it, thinking that my troubles for that night were at an end.

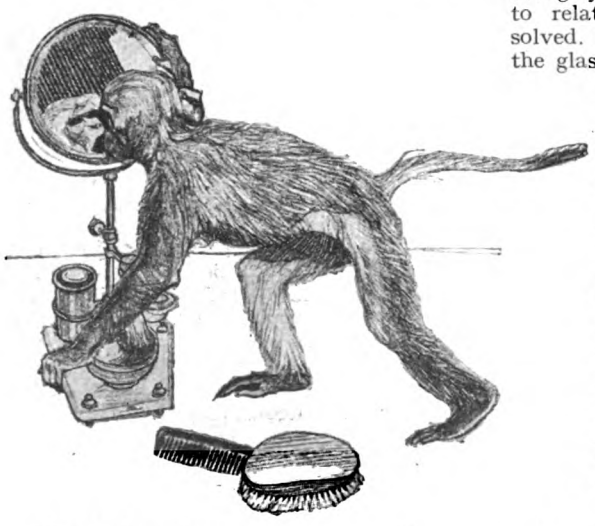
But I was mistaken. Either that baby monkey had been very badly brought up or the bag did not agree with her, for she climbed all over the tent and succeeded in making herself a perfect nuisance. I returned

her to the bag half-a-dozen times, but always with the same result; and eventually was obliged to secure the bag with a rope.

In the early hours of the morning I dozed, secure in the belief that she was now held captive. But presently I was aware of a movement near my pillow, and there sat the latest addition to the family, shivering and shaking with the cold, and beseeching —in a language curiously eloquent in its enforced silence—to be allowed admission.

The appeal was so pathetic I raised the coverlet and allowed her in. Down between the sheets she crawled to the bottom of the bed, where she wrapped herself tightly round one of my legs. I was too tired to worry, so, with the feel of her little heart pat-patting against my calf, I slipped once more into the land of dreams.

In a week that little orphan began to take an intelligent interest in the world around her; in a fortnight she had forgotten her fond parent completely; in a month she was bound to me body and soul by an indescribable bond of affection which seldom



My shaving-mirror was a never-ending source of delight to her.

arises between a relationship so strange, and yet, if we attach any importance to the Darwinian theory, which ought to be quite natural.

Throughout the time when we were together I was obliged to ply a stick pretty frequently. There were periods when she was a model of all the virtues, there were others when an irrepressible desire for mischief and adventure was beyond the limits of human endurance. Then my temper would blaze forth. I would beat her with savage satisfaction, and be overcome with remorse the next moment; for she was very lovable, was that little imp of mischief; the more I beat her the more affectionate she became. It was a pathetic business altogether.

The ink-pot on my office table attracted her like a magnet. She would sit on the very edge of the table and watch me writing, seemingly fascinated by the black lines which assumed indiscriminate shape along the paper. She knew better than to attempt closer acquaintance with the ink when I was present, but if the peons ever happened to leave the tent unguarded the blotting-pad, office papers, and table-cloth would almost invariably present intricate patterns of lines and circles; and, on further examination, the tell-tale ink stains would be revealed on the monkey's fingers.

My shaving-mirror was a never-ending source of delight to her. She examined it fifty times a day, determined to solve the riddle it always presented. The instances when she coaxed, cajoled, and fought savagely with her reflection are too numerous to relate; but the difficulty was never solved. It was all right when she looked into the glass, the other monkey always looked back at her; but what happened to her pet aversion when she looked or felt cautiously round the other side? That was the perpetual problem.

All day long she was free to do as she liked, and usually succeeded in enjoying life to the utmost; but immediately after dinner, when I retired to the office tent to see to my daily reports, she would come scampering through the flap, and spend half an hour curled up comfortably in my lap. Then she would climb up on to the table and snuggle up against the warm globe of the table lamp, only to rush back into my lap each time a jackal made horrible noises outside the tent.

Each time I looked up at her snuggled against the lamp her lips would move in a frantic effort to speak; indeed, so realistic was it on some occasions that it would seem to me she had succeeded. Sometimes a large grasshopper, attracted by the light, would frolic about the table. Two hairy arms would immediately dash after in pursuit, and the wretched insect would be a prisoner in the twinkling of an eye. There would then be enacted a scene which would have made the perpetrators of the Spanish Inquisition blush with shame.

With infinite care and precision the

Two hairy arms would immediately dash after the grasshopper, and the wretched insect would be a prisoner in the twinkling of an eye.

insect would be dismembered, and the process lengthened out as long as possible. First the legs would be removed and thrown aside, then the wings, and finally the head. The body would then be examined with the critical eye of an expert, and the whole luscious morsel transferred suddenly to her capacious mouth. She would then snuggle once more against the lamp and wait patiently for the appearance of her next victim.

Like most small children, she was blessed with abnormal curiosity. The lamp had a tall chimney, and for days she had been seized with an overwhelming desire to look down into it. The few occasions on which she succeeded in burning her nose warned her instinctively to be careful, but one night she could resist the temptation no longer, so, rising steadily on her hind legs, she peeped down on the flame six inches below.

The immediate result was as spectacular as it was amusing. All the hair on her face and head vanished unexpectedly with a sudden sizzle, which caused her to perform a flying back somersault off the table and land with a thud on the floor, where she eventually came to rest after a few more alarming capers. Then, thoroughly subdued and chastened, she scrambled back into my lap to plead for forgiveness and sympathy after the fashion of a repentant small child. Nothing could ever induce her to look down the chimney again.

Whenever I left the camp, whether on business or pleasure, that little monkey accompanied me. If not, Bedlam reigned supreme in the camp until my return. She seemed to derive the keenest delight from riding on horseback, and would sit perched up behind me on the saddle in the most comical manner; jumping to the ground whenever she felt she needed exercise, and returning to her seat *via* the horse's tail as soon as she had succeeded in attracting the attention of village dogs to herself—an undignified proceeding to which the good horse raised but little objection. It was thus that a common brown monkey acquired considerable notoriety amongst the inhabitants of a hundred native villages, and a popularity of which her self-appointed protector had occasion to be proud.

The short winter days went by on golden wings. It was a real pleasure to rise at dawn and to ride across country from village to village; to talk to the natives about their wheat and barley and their poppy fields, whilst the small boys amused themselves with

All the hair on her face and head vanished unexpectedly with a sudden sizzle.

Returning to her seat *viâ* the horse's tail.

the monkey. Life seemed very pleasant indeed. Now the gorgeous flame of the forest raised its fiery blossoms above the green and brown of tropical vegetation, and hundreds of woodpeckers transformed the quiet mango groves into gardens of song, all heralding the advent of summer.

Very soon a scorching wind was blowing unceasingly from the west, the ripening crops disappeared as if by magic, leaving in their stead a vast area of parched desolation. The temperature rose to a hundred and fifteen degrees in the shade, and certain sinister misgivings which a great many of us had experienced during the winter assumed definite shape. Famine and its attendant evils stalked unchecked through the land. It fell to my lot to work the relief measures approved of by the authorities, and to realize what it all really meant—back-breaking work under the most trying circumstances, and isolation in the wilderness for a period of six months at least.

My little companion, however, was not to know of any of these troubles. The heat did not inconvenience her in the least. She was as deaf to the music of the mating birds as she was blind to the incomparable beauty of the forest flame. She delighted in disporting herself amongst the fleshy blossoms, but only because they added another delicacy to her somewhat extensive menu.

The various little ways in which that monkey succeeded in enlivening my weary hours during those long months of toil and tribulation are too numerous to mention. The time came when she could not bear me out of her sight, so that we became constant companions. She was passionately fond of water, and was able to swim and dive with remarkable ease and grace. A dip in a village tank or stream was part of the daily programme, and it was on account of this and a sentimental stretch of imagination that she came by the name Psyche.

I remember distinctly the occasion when she inadvertently became acquainted with the business end of a huge black scorpion. The pain she suffered was excruciating, and I thought I was going to lose her. An acquired faith in my ability to allay her suffering was pathetic, and her gratefulness for any attention perfectly genuine. She was, in fact, almost human. All she lacked was the power of speech.

Most vividly do I remember another occasion when she darted suddenly off my lap and, with every hair bristling with anger, brought to bay a poisonous snake, which slithered along the matting towards the table at which I was seated writing, quite oblivious of the approaching peril. The snake poised in the middle of the tent, hood expanded, the embodiment of sinister efficiency, hissing at frequent intervals and always facing the monkey, which manœuvred round in circles. On two occasions it struck with a rapidity which the eye could scarcely follow, but Psyche knew instinctively the power of those death-dealing fangs, and was remarkably expert at avoiding them. What the ultimate result of this extraordinary contest would have been is difficult to imagine. An adult monkey would have perhaps been better equipped to deal with the situation, but Psyche was still practically an infant. Her timely intervention had probably saved me from being bitten, as it was, and I could not leave her to fight it out alone.

Arming myself with a stick, I promptly

She darted suddenly off my lap and, with every hair bristling with anger, brought to bay a poisonous snake.

killed the snake, upon which Psyche immediately grabbed it by the neck and proceeded to rub its nose vigorously in the dust, pausing every now and then to examine her handiwork — a procedure by which she eventually might have killed the reptile herself had I not intervened.

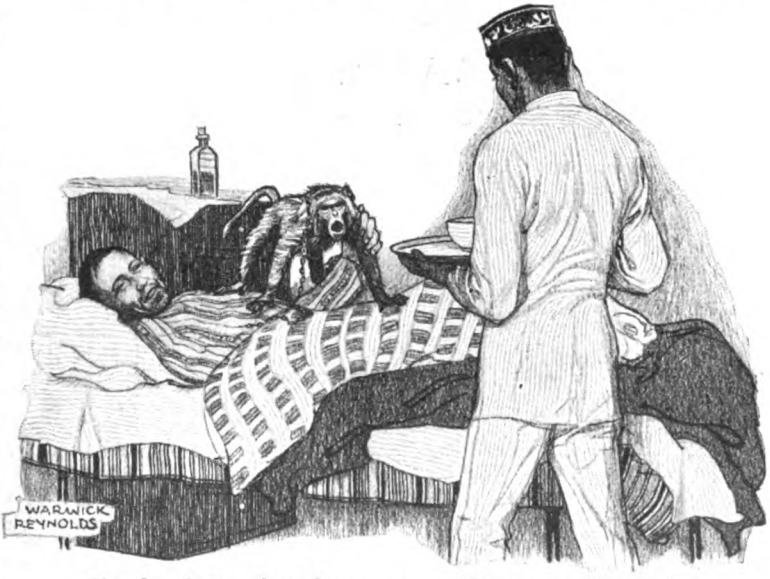
The months passed by, and a scorching summer burnt itself out without anything special to commend it. My leisure hours would have been dull indeed if Psyche had not been there to amuse and entertain, for throughout those long summer days I never got so much as a glimpse of a white face.

Then the hot winds ceased, and violent thunderstorms, with intervals of ominous calm, announced the approach of the monsoon. There followed rapid changes of temperature, and fever arrived to claim its numerous victims, of whom I was one. I was unduly casual about it, until I awoke unexpectedly one morning to find myself in a hospital, having been brought in by road and rail a distance of two hundred miles.

Without in the least knowing how I got there I heard the doctor say something about enteric fever and a run-down constitution, and immediately slipped once more into oblivion. It was three months before I was allowed visitors.

Then I remembered Psyche, who all this time had been living with my native servant. I asked that she might be brought to me. The following morning she appeared suddenly in the doorway at the end of a chain; quite a different Psyche from the one I knew, twice her size and vastly changed, revelling in the strength of maturity. I suppose I had altered, too. A fungus, which ordinarily did not exist, covered my face; and Psyche, gazing on me from the door, did not recognize me. But the moment I called to her she knew my voice, and, wrenching herself free from the servant, jumped right on to my bed, where she wound two muscular arms round me and buried her face in the hollow of my neck.

The nurse and visitors gazed in wonder at this remarkable demonstration of affection. Psyche was almost human once again. I could feel her lips moving frantically in a vain effort to speak, and I have often tried since to construct the passages to which she endeavoured to give expression. A pathetic



She dared all and sundry to come within reach of the bed.

chuckle was all that was audible. Then the protective instincts of maturity predominated, our positions were temporarily reversed, and she dared all and sundry to come within reach of the bed. She was not to be parted again from the companion of her youth.

Winter had returned ere I had regained the use of my legs. Psyche and I gambolled once more in the sunshine, and found life very pleasant indeed. We spent an afternoon at a lake, and I was afforded the pleasure of seeing Psyche bathe. I was glad to observe that her long absence from water had not detracted in the least from her efficiency as a swimmer.

It was late when we left the lake, and Psyche, always afraid of the darkness, climbed a tree, and would not come down. It was an old habit of hers, and did not worry me in the least. I knew she would be waiting for me in the morning.

When, however, I returned, Psyche had a new companion—a gay young spark of her own species, all thews, sinews, and fire, who made romantic overtures to her in a leafy arbour. Psyche behaved like the lady she was, and treated that young Lothario with commendable tact and propriety, while she gave me an appealing glance which was unmistakable. She could not conceal the fact that a stronger voice than mine had called to her, against which there was no revolting.

Whether a sense of shyness is akin to aloofness in the animal world is a difficult question, but so it seemed to be with Psyche. Seated just out of my reach, she listened patiently to my entreaties, her lips moved as usual, but the story was different. She was telling me of the parting of the ways. High up in the branches another voice coaxed and scolded. It was the age-long story, a battle of wits between two males for the possession of one of the opposite sex.

How marvellous is the overwhelming impulse of love! The inexorable law of Nature will not be denied its course. But union is not happiness, pure and unalloyed. To every creature it brings its share of tribulation—memories, perhaps, of a wild and irresponsible youth. With one last appealing look in my direction Psyche turned and climbed slowly in the direction of her newly-accepted lord and master.

In that silent wilderness I bade her a fond farewell, and the forest, which had given her birth, claimed her once again as its own.

Solution of

A NEW LINE IN CROSS-WORDS

By

BARRY PAIN.

(*See last month's "Strand."*)

			V	S	I			
			A	C	M			
			D	A	M			
F	R	E	E	V	E	R	S	E
D	R	O	M	E	D	A	R	Y
A	R	M	E	N	I	A	N	S
	E	A	C	G	A	G	U	
D	E	S	U	E	T	U	D	E
	D	T	M	R	E	E	E	

SOLUTION OF THE CROSS CROSS-WORD PUZZLE AND THE SAME SIMPLIFIED.

		S	O	M	E			
		A	F	O	R			
	C	T	I	D	L	E		
	H	A	N	D	S			
M	I	N	D			T	O	
I	E		S	T	I	L	L	
S	F					D	O	

SOLUTION OF THE QUOTATION PUZZLE.

The quotation, from Isaac Watts, is: "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."

	1	8	2	1
1	0		5	6
4		1		4
8	3		1	9
5	1	0	0	

SOLUTION OF THE LIGHT PUZZLE.

Treat as an ordinary addition sum, neglecting the black squares, and the result will be 186,000, which is the velocity of light in miles per second.

THE STRONG ARM

BY

Perceval Gibbon

ILLUSTRATED BY W. R. S. STOTT

THE store consisted of the usual half-circle of mud-walled huts, dome-shaped and straw-thatched, the straw parched brown, to the hue of the mud, by the inexorable sun of mid-Africa. Around it, beyond the stamped earth of its compound—whither came the shy, furtive black men, who drew from their hair the quills of guineafowl, whence they poured into the scales their little treasure of coarse river-gold, and received in exchange one-tenth of its value in European trash—was the dreary grey-green of the veld, lifting and falling in changing levels like the swell on a sea. And beyond that was the garish bush, painted in colours as mad as those of the backcloth of a pantomime scene, with reverend palms swaying above an idiot riot of undergrowth.

Without, the curious Kafirs from the great near-by village were crowded in rows, under the downpour of strong afternoon sun. The great burly warriors—who had never known war—with their sheaves of wire-bound sticks, sat in front, of course, squatting like toads, and seemingly alive with their eyes alone—white eyes that flickered and were still! In the midst of them was N'Bamis, the most eminent of them all, who had served under M'Kombi against the Portuguese and carried off a white woman.

He was old; he was famous; he was dreadful. Through his dreary and comic mask of a negro face there glimmered something of the terrible soul of King M'Kombi's fighting chief—brows like the pent of a roof, and eyes under them with the glint of hell-fire; and therewith a great slack mouth that sagged with appetite. He sat with the others and waited. The women and children, ranked behind them, waited also.

From the largest of the domed brown huts there walked forth—coming as from the murk of a cavern to the open blaze of the afternoon—a solitary white man. Or not quite solitary, perhaps; for in the crook of his left arm he carried a tiny white baby, that moaned, with closed eyes. He came with deliberate steps to the middle of the semicircle of huts and paused within two paces of the awful N'Bamis.

The waiting negroes sighed gustily. Now was coming drama; somebody was going to suffer entertainingly—and there is one kind of white man who dies obstinately and well—and something was going to happen at last to reward them for their waiting. You see, it was obvious that the child was a devil. Its father, the white trader, had died of blackwater fever on the day of its birth; its mother had died raving that morning; in the hut there was, in that heat, an unburied horror so formidable that none would enter it.

The white man had arrived only an hour before, making a swift trek down-country with just two carriers, like a poor man—like a Portuguese. But there was nothing Portuguese in the manner in which he took charge of things. Where none would enter, he entered unhesitatingly. He was a man of average stature, but very broad in the beam, with a face of seasoned gravity and a certain assurance and directness of manner and movement which opened an instant road for him towards the shunned hut where the dead woman and her living baby lay beside what had been her husband.

His wise, slow eye travelled over the packed ranks of the Kafirs. He was unarmed, and the baby was faintly moaning in the crook of his left elbow. He fastened on N'Bamis as the chief of them all. He spoke, in the dialect of the country, briefly and fluently, straight down into the face of the great leader of fighting-men who had

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once carried off a white woman and lived to boast of it.

It was like a confrontation, the great negro captain, whose career was a mere catalogue of pitiless slaughter, and Kirby Jones, surnamed Gorilla Jones, because of his superhuman strength—who could break a man across his knee as another could break a stick of firewood, who never oppressed the weak nor suffered bullies gladly.

He spoke to N'Bamis.

"Call six men," he said, very clearly. "They are to dig a grave and bury the *umlungu* and his wife at once. So—call six men!"

The whole gathering craned to hear. The great negro did not rise. The hell-fire lit in his eyes, and there was a sneer upon his sagging mouth as he motioned with his head towards the big hut whence Kirby Jones had come forth, where the dreadful dead lay.

"There are no six men who will—or who shall—go into that *kia*," he answered, and his face broadened in a grin.

Kirby Jones looked on him with a manner of serious consideration. Gorilla Jones did nothing at any time for which he could not account to himself.

"Call six men!" he repeated.

Again the negro grinned, squatting where he was. Then he seemed to leap to his feet, and go through the first motions of a grotesque dance. And he yelled! For Kirby Jones, of Kentucky, with the baby yet upon his left arm, had suddenly reached with his right and taken hold of him. There was nothing in the customary calm and quiet of demeanour in Kirby Jones to indicate to an opponent the snake-like swiftness with which he could go into action.

He had his man by the bare black forearm. The baby was against his shoulder. His terrible great hand, hard as the hoof of a horse, and well-nigh as big as his foot, crushed bone to bone and flesh against both, while his patient yelled and he himself preserved a face of undiminished calm. When N'Bamis tried to strike him, he merely twisted, and then King M'Kombi's pet murderer—the nigger who had carried off a white woman—fell to abject howling.

And all the time the baby lay against Kirby Jones's shoulder and moaned feebly.

"Call six men!" said Jones. At a moment's hesitation upon the part of his captive he tightened his grip again. A new howl rewarded him, and a swift babble of six names. Six men stood forward promptly.

"Good!" said Kirby Jones. "I'll show them where to dig. But you"—he was still holding the big negro—"I don't trust you. I don't want an assegai in my back while I'm overlooking them."

"Baas!" whined the negro.

"Fine!" said Kirby Jones, in his own tongue. "No need to worry about Kafir, 'cos what I'm goin' to do'll be mighty easy to understand in any man's language."

The baby still lay against his shoulder; the gallery of Kafirs still stared. There were enough of them to beat him into pulp with their wire-bound sticks twenty times over, and there was probably not one who cared in the least for what he purposed to do to N'Bamis. That chieftain was not beloved. Sovereigns never are. But there was that in the mien of Kirby Jones which had power to quell them. None stirred.

He raised his voice. He was holding the great war-chief by the arm—by the arm which had carried off a white woman. He spoke again in Kafir.

"Look, all!" he said. "This is N'Bamis, the warrior of M'Kombi! This is the arm he won battles with; I am holding him by it! And now, so that he shall never win another, I will break it with my one hand, and without setting down the child. Look!"

And then and there he did it. The awful iron grip closed like a vice; a wrench, a twist, and a scream, and N'Bamis, the scourge, the terror, whose name was used to curse with, whose face was a nightmare, the great warrior, the terrible ruler, was dropped to squirm and writhe upon the ground, howling, maimed, defeated, and abject in the sight of all. And all the while the baby moaned.

"See!" said Kirby Jones. "He would not bury the dead. He has paid the price for insolence to a dead *umlungu*. So think, all of you"—he lifted the weary, drooping baby for them to see—"think what will be the price of this *umlungu*, who is not dead!"

N'Bamis was still making whining noises upon the ground. Kirby Jones looked at him for some moments, seriously, as his manner was; then he spat.

"*Inja!*" he uttered. "Dog! Now we'll dig the grave. But first, a woman to feed the child! Who's got a woman to sell? Speak up!"

THE woman was forthcoming, at a fair market price, estimated and paid in terms of yards of *limbo*, the figured cotton sheeting which, with gin, alarm-clocks, and sometimes salt, is currency in thousands of square miles of the earth not yet cursed with the institution of money. She was a stout, willing wench, one of the widows of a citizen who had recently expiated some offence against the rule of N'Bamis by dying at length and very painfully. She took the baby from the strong man's unskilled arms; and within a minute its faint pitiful moaning had ceased.

"Look, all!" he said. "This is N'Bamis, the warrior of M'Kombi! This is the arm he won battles with; I am holding him by it! And now I will break it with my one hand, and without setting down the child. Look!"

Kirby Jones watched the arrangements with interest.

"Hungry—was that it? There's sure a lot about babies that I don't know. An' now for this grave-diggin' *indaba!*"

So in the cool of the evening that thing of utter horror which had been the trader and the body of the stricken wife, whom N'Bamis had pent up with it, were laid to rest in a space where tall palms made a colonnade about them, and Kirby Jones spoke above them such words as he could remember of the Burial Service.

Next day saw him moving southwards—it was his purpose to deposit the baby at a mission station—and the strange party of them went forth in single file, as the fashion is in African travel. The two carriers were in the van, their corded loads upon their heads; after them came the bought woman, with the baby tied upon her back in the native style; then two goats which were to furnish milk as long as they lasted and then to furnish meat; and last, in the post of command, came Kirby Jones, his rifle in the crook of his arm, his stolid, kindly face shaded by the down-turned brim of his hat.

All Africa drowsed about them in grey-green of the veld, with its patches of thorn or painted bush. The mighty sun mounted over them in the great blue dome, till at length it was time to halt for the midday from his tyranny.

It was then that Mrs. Cabot, the missionary, came upon them, where they rested in a patch of shade under the lee of a clump of mimosas. The two carriers and the bought woman lay crumpled in the abandon of slumber; the tethered goats were crunching thorn-branches; and a burly white man, large in the frame and brown in the face, was walking to and fro, singing as he walked in a low monotone, and bearing in his arms a very small white baby. And at moments he would look down on his little burden, and then his good serious face would soften into something that those who knew him as Gorilla Jones, who could break a man as others could break a doll, had never seen.

Of course, Mrs. Cabot had the whole story in half an hour, while her party made its orderly and elaborate bivouac. She sat on her rolled mattress with the baby in her lap while she heard it. Her wise mild eyes, which had seen so much of variegated and incongruous humanity, never left his face while he spoke.

"Of course," he wound up, "I'll be glad to turn it over to you, ma'am. It's what I was coming to do, hand it over to a mission. You see, I have no regular place I could take it to myself. Or else—maybe——"

"Yes?" breathed Mrs. Cabot.

"I'd ha' done my best to make a man of him. Wives an' kids don't come my way, and I reckon they never will. Still——"

He sighed. Mrs. Cabot laughed and he looked up swiftly with offence in his eye. She shook her head.

"No," she said. "You're not the person to make a man of it. You see, Gorilla——"

"See what?"

"It's a little girl!"

ACROSTICS.

OUR twenty-ninth series of acrostics begins with No. 141, printed below, and will run for four months. Prizes to the value of twelve guineas will be awarded to the most successful solvers.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 141.

Two English poets here we show.
They lived and died long years ago.
In one the Pilgrims' tales are seen,
In one we meet the Faerie Queene.

1. An island seaport here we seek:
Let kine suggest regatta week.
2. The camel's back it may adorn.
But men who get it feel forlorn.
3. Where Justice tries full many a case,
A donkey takes the leading place.
4. He fought, and failed to win the crown;
The Lion beat him round the town.
5. This annual event, when here,
Should be attended by good cheer.
6. I give to you, you give to me:
If fair, there is no robbery.
7. Now recollect, recall to mind,
A rhyme for wintry month we find.

REMUS.

Answers to Acrostic No. 141 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on April 14th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper, or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, and nothing else. Flimsy paper should not be used.*

One alternative answer may be sent to each light.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No 140.

1. M	o	B
2. A	s t e	R
3. R	u s o	E
4. K	n o t	T
5. T	u r p	H
6. W	a m b	A
7. A	l t c a	R
8. I	g a m i s	T
9. N	a a m a t h i t	E

NOTES.—Light 1. The derivation. Cobnut. 2. The termination, as in poetaster. Aster, the bowman who blinded Philip of Macedon. 3. Alexander Selkirk, Robinson Crusoe; Cowper's poem. 4. Lowell, The Unhappy Lot of Mr. Knott. 5. Shakespeare, The Taming of the Shrew, Induction, Scene 2. Anagram, Pruth, affluent of river Danube. 6. Scott, Ivanhoe; Wamba, son of Witless. 7. Waterloo Cup, coursing, dogs. 8. Lady great, big Amy. Bigamist. 9. Job's three friends. An ait, Meath.

MR. CLEMENTS

By

DENIS MACKAIL

I.

ILLUSTRATED BY REGINALD CLEAVER

THE respectable-looking man-servant helped Mr. Clements into his overcoat, handed him his hat and umbrella, and prepared to open the front door.

"Will you have a taxi, sir?" he asked.

Mr. Clements gave a slight start.

"No, thanks," he answered. "I—I think I'll walk."

At this reply almost anyone but that respectable-looking man-servant must also have given a slight start. For though Mr. Clements was neither grossly stout nor obviously infirm nor yet patently lame, somehow or other the mind jibbed at the notion of his walking. An aura of taxicabs seemed to surround him. Not of private cars, mark you; for although you saw at once that he was rich, you also saw that he would never assume a responsibility which he could avoid. For this reason you pictured him living in a private suite at some big hotel; having his meals ordered for him by the head waiter, his face shaved for him by the barber, and his reading matter chosen for him by the young lady at the news-stand. You beheld him periodically removing himself to other big hotels—in the country, by the sea, or abroad—and there handing the conduct of his life over to further waiters, barbers, and young ladies at news-stands. And after that your imagination left off. But it may be added that for once it had done its work with startling accuracy.

Of course, Mr. Clements hadn't always been like this. He had a story which he sometimes tried to tell to chance acquaintances at the Serene or the Stupendous of how he had once been a banker (or possibly a broker) in Hong-Kong (or perhaps in the Straits Settlements). The vagueness of this past was not due to any failure on the part of Mr. Clements's memory, nor was he trifling in the slightest degree with the truth. But the fact was that the chance acquaintances found it quite impossible to concentrate their attention on anything which Mr. Clements said for more than the first three minutes. After that he might safely have confessed to highway robbery or murder without the slightest fear of his confession being heard. To express it more concisely, he was a thundering old bore.

We may assume, however, that he had once lived in the East, and that he had retired with quite as much money as he could ever possibly hope to spend. He had no relations, no interests, and no friends. But as he had no imagination either, he was perfectly happy and contented with things as they were. At the Serene Hotel—where he spent most of the year—they said he was a "very nice old gentleman," and in Serene circles that is a description which bears but one meaning. It indicates that the gentleman in question is fully equipped with every unit in the national currency, and that he reacts with the utmost sensitiveness and speed to any itching palm which may manifest itself in his neighbourhood.

And now we have completed the portrait of Mr. Clements up to the point where—half an hour before the opening of this narrative—he had entered Sir Mortimer Cumberland's consulting-room in search of professional advice. Just as he daily handed himself over to the hotel barber to be lathered and scraped, so now he had allowed Sir Mortimer to unbutton his waistcoat and examine his person without offering either opposition or assistance.

"No," he had replied to one of the few questions which had been put to him. "I should hardly call it a pain. More a passing feeling of discomfort, which has not so far returned. However, I happened to mention it to the valet who looks after me at the Serene, and it was really his suggestion that I should come and see you.

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After all, at my time of life, you know, I suppose one ought to be careful."

And then he had smiled his dull smile; for in spite of what he had just said about his "time of life," he didn't really imagine that anything could possibly be wrong with him. He was, in fact, merely uttering the first words which had come into his head.

But Sir Mortimer had not returned that smile. For one thing he hadn't been particularly pleased to learn of his recommendation by an hotel valet; and for another thing he had just heard a very definite and distinctive sound through the ear-pieces of his stethoscope. His questions suddenly increased in number, and Mr. Clements—who certainly wasn't paying three guineas so as to be subjected to any kind of inconvenience—began to wonder whether he might not be late for lunch.

From this speculation his mind was abruptly and unpleasantly recalled.

"*What?*" he had asked, with a sound of resentment in his voice.

Sir Mortimer was on his dignity at once.

"There is nothing to prevent your calling in another opinion if you choose," he said.

"No, no," said Mr. Clements, hastily. And then, still with more than a trace of annoyance: "But I say, can't anything be done?"

Sir Mortimer began coiling up his stethoscope.

"I should only be misleading you," he answered, "if I pretended that it could."

"Oh," said Mr. Clements. And from that point until he had found himself outside in the street, his recollection of events was vague and misty in the extreme.

YET as he walked away towards his hotel—his general appearance causing taxi after taxi to linger invitingly by his side—the fact presented itself to him clearly enough. At a period roughly estimated as within the next three months he was—if Sir Mortimer could be believed—suddenly to leave this sphere for good and all. Nothing, apparently, could be done to delay his departure. Somewhere inside him a piece of mechanism had been set which—like an uncontrollable alarm-clock—would go off at its appointed hour; and when it did go off——

Mr. Clements looked round at the busy streets, the bustling wayfarers, and the bright shop windows. He shook his head at yet another taxi-driver. And then, suddenly, an unsuspected philosophy came to his assistance.

After all, the thing was settled. Sir Mortimer had taken all responsibility out of his hands. It would have been much more of a nuisance if he had been ordered a rest-cure, or a voyage round the world; or if he had been given a list of things which he mustn't eat. He wondered already why he had allowed himself to feel so upset. It was the custom, of course, to regard one's extinction with alarm and regret, but though Mr. Clements had the utmost confidence in Sir Mortimer's verdict—as he had in everything else for which he had paid—the more he tried to picture the world going on without him, the more ridiculous the notion appeared.

"I suppose," he said to himself, "I ought to be in the devil of a funk. But can I truthfully say that I am?"

The unwonted effort at introspection brought him up short on the pavement, and simultaneously the latest prowling taxi-driver clapped on his brakes.

"Cab, sir?" he asked.

Mr. Clements never hesitated.

"Yes," he said. "Go to the Serene Hotel."

He opened the door and climbed in, slamming it again behind him. The driver gave a firm tug at his little flag, and off they went.

But the processes set at work by Sir Mortimer Cumberland did not cease with this sudden, almost defiant resumption of routine. Though Mr. Clements had definitely abandoned introspection, he had by no means finished with the objective aspects of his new position. He was wondering—with a detached but growing interest—how he could best employ his remaining time on earth so as to get the utmost value for his money. Literally, as he was beginning to realize, Sir Mortimer had presented him with a freedom from responsibility compared with which his life until to-day had been bondage and slavery. He could do absolutely anything that he chose without the slightest fear that he could ever be held accountable for the results. He could plunge into unbridled debauchery—if he wanted to—and yet be dead before he had tasted anything but the pleasant side of it. He could commit a murder—and here he pointed an imaginary pistol at the back of the driver's neck—and laugh at judge and jury from the dock. He could realize all his securities and play Old Harry in the City—dragging down with him a whole hecatomb of bankrupts. He could carve his name on the seats in the Park, he could drive on the wrong side of the road, he could pull the communication cords in railway carriages—and all these without so much as a thought of the consequences.

Did we say just now that Mr. Clements had no imagination? Let us never say that of any man again. In less than five minutes—under the strange stimulus applied by Sir

Mortimer Cumberland—the ideas which came bubbling up in his mind would have set up a scenario-writer for life. Did we say that he had no interests, or that he was a thundering old bore? If so, it looks as though we had little known our man. And yet this passing frenzy left him almost as suddenly as it had arrived. As the cab slowed down to turn into the Serene courtyard, the solitary occupant pulled out a large silk handkerchief and wiped his forehead as if he were wiping away the queer thoughts which had arisen behind it. Of course, he could do none of these things really. Of course not. Unless——

And then it was that Mr. Clements had the oddest idea of all.

II.

ONE may suppose that it had been there subconsciously for years; that in spite of his free-handed acquiescence in a universal system, some ganglion in his brain had been making an inaudible protest from the very beginning. After all, Mr. Clements was—one must remember—a self-made man; and as such, despite his present wealth, the old instincts of caution and economy might never entirely have been wiped out. On the other hand, there was a singular recklessness about his sudden decision with which these instincts would seem to have but little connection. Undoubtedly he would never have put his plan into practice if he had not been released by Sir Mortimer's pronouncement from all the restrictions which beset ordinary men.

For, quite briefly, Mr. Clements had determined at that moment that for the rest of his short term on this earth he would entirely abandon his custom of reacting to the aforementioned itching palms. No quantity of hat-touching, of springing to attention, of bidding him good morning or of asking him if he were quite comfortable, should tempt from his pocket a single coin of the realm. Let the heavens fall, if they so chose, but with the paying off of this taxicab he would have given the last tip which any human being should ever extract from him.

The idea grew, and gathered force as it did so. Not only the Serene and the London taxi-drivers should learn of his new resolution. He would make a round of all the hotels where he was best known. In each of them he would order the best room, the best food, and the best wine, and then—when the time came for him to leave, and the staff assembled magically around his waiting luggage—he would thank them in a few well-chosen words, and so depart to the next point in his solitary crusade.

After all that talk of criminal excesses, this decision of Mr. Clements may strike you already as something of an anti-climax. You would prefer to have heard of his winding up his career by becoming a gentleman-burglar, or by some spectacular expenditure of his large fortune. We apologize, but it is our duty to record what actually took place. And, besides, the story of Mr. Clements is not over yet.

III.

FOR forty-eight hours the staff at the Serene Hotel were content to attribute this remarkable change to a temporary fit of absent-mindedness on the part of their old patron. Their attentions and service were as eager as ever, and it seems possible that they counted on some specially large disbursements to set things right, when he should realize his forgetfulness. But Mr. Clements gave no sign of returning to his normal behaviour, and at the end of this period an incident took place which threw a fresh and alarming light on the whole affair.

He had sent a page-boy out from the restaurant to buy him an evening paper at the news-stand, and for this purpose had given him a threepenny-bit. The boy had executed his commission, had returned with the newspaper on an electro-plated tray, and had then prepared to withdraw.

Mr. Clements had stopped him.

"Wait," he had said. "You've forgotten my change."

Of course the boy had no immediate alternative but to produce twopence from his pocket, but inside twenty minutes the news was all over the hotel. A hurried meeting of the local branch of the Ganymede Association was called, and the boy was summoned before it to repeat his evidence. Other members of the staff testified in turn, and though some of them still expressed the opinion that—in view of the delinquent's past record—the whole thing was an oversight, a show of hands proved these to form but a small minority. There was, as the chairman had said, no getting away from that threepenny-bit.

It only remained, then, to appoint a small sub-committee to take charge of the affair on the lines laid down by the standing orders; and when this had been done, the general meeting broke up—leaving the sub-committee already hard at work.

The first apparent result of their deliberations was that at about half-past four on the same afternoon Mr. Basso—one of the manager's assistants—went upstairs to Mr. Clements's suite. Ostensibly his mission was simply to present Mr. Clements's weekly bill, but in reality he had been authorized by the sub-committee to put certain innocent-looking questions to the accused. In actual fact, he never got farther than the first.

For when Mr. Basso, rubbing his hands politely together, had said, "I hope you are still quite satisfied with the service, sir?" Mr. Clements had (so he reported) first given him a very strange look, and then had come right out into the open at once.

"If anybody in this hotel imagines," he had replied, "that I am in future going to pay one penny more than the legitimate charges in my weekly account, then they are wholly and utterly mistaken. It may, however, interest you to know that I have this morning purchased a large block of debentures in the Serene Hotels Company, and that if I notice any attempt at neglect or inattention on the part of the staff, I shall know how to protect myself. Don't let me detain you any longer. Good afternoon."

And then Mr. Basso, who from behind the counter of the reception bureau was in the habit of out-staring Grand Dukes and millionaires, had ignominiously left the room. "It was quite impossible," he told the sub-committee, "for me to do anything else. The only explanation I can offer is that Mr. Clements has gone mad."

If the sub-committee had heard the merry chuckles which were at that moment filling Mr. Clements's private suite, they might perhaps have accepted this explanation. But in the absence of this evidence they hardly knew what to do next. The knowledge that the offender now held two thousand pounds' worth of first debentures on the hotel—which had been ascertained by reference to the secretary of the company—seemed to put all ordinary means of retaliation out of court. It was no good pouring soup over Mr. Clements in the restaurant, putting blacking on his brown boots, omitting to answer his bell, or warming his champagne, if he were in a position—as he now undoubtedly was—to secure the dismissal of anyone who annoyed him. It was no use telling him that his rooms would be needed, when he was known to have taken them by the year.

The demoralizing effect of his sudden stand may perhaps best be indicated by an extraordinary remark made by a member of the sub-committee—Mr. Castanetti, who was a *maitre d'hôtel* in the grill-room.

He would order the best room, the best food, and the —he would thank the assembled

"After all," he said, in his perfect English, "I reckon Mr. Clements has paid away something like five hundred pounds as tips in my place alone since he's been here. I guess he's earned a vacation if anyone has."

One is glad to learn that the only result of this treacherous comment was that Mr. Castanetti was instantly compelled to resign not only from the sub-committee, but also from the Ganymede Association—with the sequel that he had to return to Italy, where, by the way, he is now prominent in the inner circles of the Fascisti.

It was Mr. Gustav Duhamel, of the Palm Court, who—after this regrettable incident—submitted the first constructive suggestion.

"This is how I look at it," he said.

" We've all known Mr. Clements for years, and it's pretty obvious that—unless he *has* gone mad—there's some reason at the back of all this. It's up to us to find out what that reason is."

" Certainly," said Mr. Basso. " But how ? "

best wine, and then—when the time came for him to leave staff in a few well-chosen words.

" We must discover," answered Mr. Duhamel, " when he gave his last tip, and everything that he did from that moment. By that means we may hope to light on the true cause, and once we know that, we shall already be some way towards removing it."

There was a murmur of agreement at these wise words, in the middle of which Mr. Basso fluttered the leaves of the book in which the accounts of the Serene *tronc* were kept.

" The last tip that Mr. Clements gave," he said, presently, " was on Wednesday morning. Here it is. Half a crown to one of the hall boys, for helping him out through the revolving door."

" That's right," added a speaker from the bottom of the table. " And when he came in about a quarter past one, I picked up his umbrella for him, and he only said ' Thank you.' "

" That seems to settle it," said Mr. Basso. " Where did Mr. Clements go on Wednesday morning ? "

" We'll have to try and get in touch with his taxi-driver," suggested the previous speaker.

" Wait a minute, though," said Mr. Duhamel. " There may be a quicker way than that. Let's send for his valet. Mr. Clements may have mentioned where he was going."

This plan was adopted. The valet was forthwith summoned before the sub-committee, and —as we know—he was able to supply the desired information at once. Mr. Clements had gone that morning to keep an appointment with Sir Mortimer Cumberland.

" Did he tell you at all what Sir Mortimer had said ? " asked Mr. Basso.

" No, sir," said the valet. " But I saw him directly after lunch, and he seemed particularly cheerful. He'd been rather worried before about his health, but I gathered that Sir Mortimer must have told him there was absolutely nothing wrong with him."

The sub-committee found itself up against a blank wall. It might guess, and guess again, but there was no way of causing a distinguished specialist to yield up the secrets of his consulting-room. Besides, what connection *could* there be between a visit to a doctor—whom, according to the valet, Mr. Clements had never even heard of until he had made the appointment—and this sudden outbreak of nihilism ?

Mr. Duhamel, who, five minutes ago, had looked like being the hero of the meeting, found himself abruptly left out in the cold.

" The sub-committee can do nothing more at the moment," said Mr. Basso. " We must adjourn until some fresh development arises."

He gathered up his papers and left the

"Wait," said Mr. Clements. "You've forgotten my change."

room, but there was no protest at his admission of impotence. It was a fact too obvious at that juncture to admit of argument. Mr. Clements had won the first round.

IV.

THE only fresh development which did arise, however, was that on the following morning Mr. Clements suddenly caused his clothes to be packed in a couple of suit-cases, and took his departure for the Stupendous Hotel at Newcliff-on-Sea. It goes without saying that, as soon as his destination became known, both suit-cases were decorated with adhesive labels so placed as to warn everyone at the Stupendous that their owner was to be ranked in the very worst class of non-tipper. With luggage marked in this way, an ordinary visitor would have found it impossible to secure a room at any hotel where the international code was understood. But on this occasion the outside porter at the Stupendous—who was to suffer for it afterwards—knowing Mr. Clements so well, could only assume that some foolish mistake had been made. He had accordingly whipped off the labels before anyone but himself had seen them, and Mr. Clements entered into possession of his favourite suite without encountering the slightest difficulty.

Within less than two days history had accurately repeated itself. There had been a short but painful scene in the private suite between its occupant and Mr. Herz, the head-waiter. And Mr. Herz had left the room not only with that unspeakable ultimatum ringing in his ears, but with the added knowledge that Mr. Clements held fifteen hundred pounds' worth of stock in Stupendous Hotels, Limited, and was prepared to raise Cain at the next general meeting if his present comfort suffered in the slightest degree.

And after this, for a space, we lose sight of the translated Mr. Clements. News drifted in to the Serene by different channels and from various sources that he was passing like a blight from hotel to hotel. He was heard of in Manchester and Liverpool, in Brussels, Amsterdam, and Paris—always in the most luxurious hotel, and always behaving in the same unmentionable and insufferable way. Reports went up to the headquarters of the Ganymede Association — which sits in perpetual conference in Berne—and forceful instructions were returned by the General Executive. "All branches," one of these instructions ran, "will see that in future Mr. Clements's hot bottle is filled with tepid water, and that a slight leakage occurs." "Until further notice," said another, "Mr. Clements's soup will contain at least one hair, not less than six inches in length." But these orders were never carried out. Mr. Clements's brokers were working overtime to supply him with the hotel shares which he was constantly buying—and as constantly selling. The local branches might gnash their teeth, but the "very nice old gentleman" (as he had once been described) had caught them in a strangle-hold from which they were powerless to escape.

Back in London, Mr. Duhamel had not let the grass grow under his feet. He had used every possible threat and persuasion to induce Sir Mortimer's respectable-looking man-servant to betray the secret of his employer's case-book—hoping to find there the explanation which he was still certain must exist. But though he had eventually won his point, the case-book had told him nothing. Sir Mortimer had merely entered a series of symbols to which he alone, as it would seem, possessed the key. Mr. Duhamel's sallow countenance had become

contorted with the efforts which he had made to pierce the mystery, but in the end he had to admit that he was beaten.

V.

AND then one day—about ten weeks after his sudden departure—Mr. Clements had as abruptly returned. The first intimation which the staff at the Serene received of this fact was the sound of a violent string of oaths from the taxi-driver who had brought him and his two suit-cases from the station; and it was obvious at the same moment that the *ci-devant* very nice old gentleman was still carrying on his abominable practices.

"I sha'n't be going away again," he had told the valet when he got upstairs, and at the emergency meeting of the sub-committee which was immediately called this ominous statement was all the agenda that was needed. As before, though—wrangle and argue as they might—the sub-committee found it impossible to see any escape from the deadlock.

Mr. Duhamel, however, had taken no part in the dispute, and only when the others were pausing from sheer exhaustion did he at last open his mouth.

"I am still convinced," he said, "that the cause of all this is connected with Mr. Clements's visit to Sir Mortimer Cumberland. And I believe, moreover, that if anything could be done to shake his confidence in Sir Mortimer, we should be well on the way to a solution of the difficulty."

"That may be," replied Mr. Basso, a little curtly. "But how on earth do you imagine anyone's going to do that?"

Mr. Duhamel leant back easily in his chair.

"If the sub-committee will leave it to me," he said, "I think something might be done."

And eventually, though with very little sign of enthusiasm, the sub-committee decided to agree. The meeting broke up, and Mr. Duhamel was left alone with the valet.

"Is that perfectly clear?" he asked his fellow-conspirator ten minutes later.

"Perfectly," said the valet. "But aren't you afraid of the manager?"

Mr. Duhamel smiled faintly.

"Not," he replied, "as long as he gets his share of the *tronc*."

The following morning Mr. Clements was lying comfortably in bed, turning over in his mind the still inexhaustible pleasures of his recent trip on the Continent. Not for an instant, as he told himself, did he regret the decision which he had taken, or the manner in which he had carried it out. It had brought a zest and interest to his last days which no other possible expenditure of the time and money could have done. One might without exaggeration describe it as the inspiration of a genius.

As he thought of the trail of angry or surly faces which he had left in no fewer than twenty-seven first-class hotels, the bedroom once more resounded to his happy chuckling. It had been wonderful. More wonderful than anything that anyone had

It was obvious that the old gentleman was still carrying on his abominable practices.

"Which is the patient?" asked the doctor.
Mr. Clements from the bed pointed to the writhing and foaming Charles. "There," he said.
The doctor knelt on the floor and took something from his bag.

ever done. He had fought the most powerful vested interest in the entire civilized world, he had fought it single-handed, and he had won.

And having won, he could afford to sign the codicil to his will which would restore the missing gratuities—as far as possible—to everyone whom he had defied. It would be a final gesture of contempt from beyond the grave, and one which would be the more exquisitely satisfactory to the testator, in that only he would appreciate the intended insult.

He felt for his spectacles and drew the will from the envelope in which it had reached him. Yes, his solicitors had carried out his instructions to the letter. He would ring for the valet to witness his signature, and then——

A knock on the door interrupted his thoughts.

"Come in!" he called.

How opportune. It was the valet himself.

"Good morning, Charles," said Mr. Clements.

"Good morning, sir," said the valet. And then instantly, without a sign of warning, he uttered a loud shriek, fell on the ground, and began foaming realistically at the mouth.

"A doctor!" he groaned. "For Heaven's sake, sir, telephone for a doctor."

Mr. Clements had already lifted the receiver by his bedside.

"Get hold of a doctor at once," he shouted, "and send him up to my suite. One of the servants has had a fit."

Charles, his mouth full of soap, foamed like a soda fountain.

"Don't touch me," he cried.

Mr. Clements lay peacefully back in his bed.

"The doctor will be here in a minute," he said. And sure enough, his prophecy proved correct. A pale, dark-bearded gentleman, carrying a professional black bag, came hurrying into the bedroom.

"Which is the patient?" he asked.

Mr. Clements pointed to the writhing and foaming Charles.

"There," he said.

The doctor knelt on the floor, took something from his bag, and in a second the valet was sitting up—calm and apparently cured.

"Has anyone been attending you for these symptoms?" asked the doctor, kindly.

"Yes, sir," said Charles. "I have been going to Sir Mortimer Cumberland."

The effect of this disclosure was overwhelming.

"What!" exclaimed the doctor—with more than an eye now on Mr. Clements. "That impostor! That blackguard! Do you mean to say that you've been letting him treat you? Don't you know that he is the most unscrupulous practitioner in London? That he's made more idiotic mistakes than everyone else in Harley Street put together? That his name's a byword in the profession? You must have been mad to take his advice, or to believe a single word that he said."

Mr. Clements leant eagerly forward over the counterpane.

"Excuse me, doctor," he said. "But is—is that really true?"

"True!" echoed this unprofessional physician. "Why, it's notorious."

Mr. Clements stared back at him with a look of pitiful terror.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "What have I done? If Sir Mortimer made a mistake with me, *where am I going to live?*"

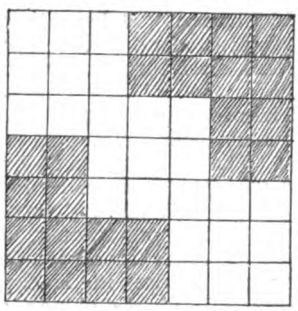
Doctor and valet exchanged a quick glance, but even in that fraction of a second an answer had been found to the question. The alarm-clock to which Mr. Clements once likened himself had buzzed and stopped. As Mr. Duhamel—with the black beard stuffed hastily in his pocket—ran ashen-faced into the corridor, with Charles the valet close on his heels, he knew well enough that the sub-committee would never meet again.

"Death from natural causes," was the coroner's verdict. "And I am sure," he added, "that I am only expressing what we all feel when I say how regrettable it is that the deceased should not have been able to complete that most generous codicil to his will on which he appears to have been working during the last moments of his life."

PERPLEXITIES.

— By —
HENRY E. DUDENEY.

743.—NOVEL CROSS-WORD PUZZLE.



A	A	A	A	C	
C	E	E	E	E	
I	I	N	N	O	
P	R	R	S	S	
T	T	T	W	W	

HERE is a little variation from the popular cross-word puzzle. I give the definitions of all the words, but do not indicate their locations or directions, horizontal or vertical. At the foot I give all the twenty-five letters used. As all except four are three-letter words, it is not difficult to find a good many probable words and then try fitting them together, but good guesses at the five-letter words will be very helpful. DEFINITIONS: Expression of grief. A domestic animal. A disturbance. A youth. Mimic. A line. Rents. Cold. A punishment. A trap. A lover. An animal. Worn on the head. A table delicacy.

744.—EXPLORING THE DESERT.

NINE travellers, each possessing a motor-car, meet on the Eastern edge of a desert. They wish to explore the interior, always going due West. Each car can travel 40 miles on the contents of the engine tank, which holds a gallon of petrol, and each can carry nine extra gallon tins of petrol and no more. Unopened tins can alone be transferred from car to car. What is the greatest distance at which they can enter the desert without making any depots of petrol for the return journey?

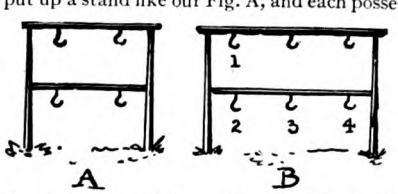
745.—CRYPTIC VERSE.

THE following verse was written on the flyleaf of a book of poems presented to a lady by her lover in early Victorian times. Can you read it?

U O a O but I O thee;
O O no O but O O me;
Let not my O a O go,
But give O O I O thee so.

746.—LAMP SIGNALS.

Two boys living on opposite banks of a wide river contrived a method for signalling at night. They each put up a stand like our Fig. A, and each possessed



two signal lamps which could show either White, Red, or Green light. After constructing a code they found that they could get 39 different signals. Note that a single lamp hung on any one of the four hooks could only mean the same thing, and that two lamps hung on the upper hooks would be the same as on the lower hooks. Location does not count: only relativity. The reader should check those 39 ways.

Now, a valued Danish correspondent (E. L. L.), living in India, suggests that the boys should reconstruct their stands, as in Fig. B, and buy a third lamp, also showing the three colours like the others, and then they can extend their code considerably. How many different signals would then be possible? I had better say that two red lamps on hooks 1 and 3 could be distinguished from two on 1 and 4; and two on 2 and 3 would be different from two on 2 and 4. It will be found an interesting little enumeration.

747.—AN OLD CHARADE.

HERE is another old riddle, for the amusement of those who like these trifles:—

My *first* is sometimes on and sometimes under the table. My *second* sounds like a small grain. My *third* is what most people wish for. My *whole* is one of the United States.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

738.—THE CROSS-WORD CLOWN.

HORIZONTAL.—1. Fig. 4. Canoe. 6. Warfare. 8. Marmalade. 10. E. G. 11. Ea. 12. Solution. 17. Snag. 18. Cast. 19. Sheet. 20. So. 22. Or. 23. Norfolk. 29. Firpo. 30. Poe. VERTICAL.—1. Farm. 2. Infant. 3. Goal. 4. Car. 5. Era. 6. Wagon. 7. Edens. 8. Messes. 9. Easter. 13. Las. 14. Ugh. 15. Ice. 16. Oat. 21. On. 22. O.K. 24. Of. 25. Rip. 26. Fro. 27. Ope. 28. Lo.

739.—DIVIDING BY ELEVEN.

To be divisible by 11, four of the alternate digits must sum to 17 and the remaining five to 28, or four to 28 and five to 17. Thus, in the example I gave (4 8 2 5 3 9 7 6 1), 4, 2, 3, 7, 1 sum to 17, and 8, 5, 9, 6 to 28. Now four digits will sum to 17 in 9 different ways and five to 17 in 2 ways, making 11 together. In each of the 11 cases 4 may be permuted in 24 ways and 5 in 120 ways, or together in 2,880 ways. So that $2,880 \times 11 = 31,680$ ways. As the nine digits can be permuted in 362,880 ways, the chances are just 126 to 11 against a haphazard arrangement being divisible by 11.

740.—A BURIED PROVERB.

THE proverb is, "Let every man skin his own skunk."

741.—THE PERPLEXED BANKER.

THE contents of the ten bags should be as follows: 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 489. The first nine numbers are in geometrical progression, and their sum, deducted from 1,000, gives the contents of the tenth bag.

742.—A CHARADE.

THE word is WASHERWOMAN. ("*Woman* is my end, *was* my beginning, and you will always find *her* in my midst.")

MAY 7 1925

EROME K. JEROME'S HUMOROUS CONFESSIONS

"Look—quick!
Here comes
our HOVIS!"

In the familiar covered wagons, HOVIS flour is delivered to your baker uncontaminated by dirt or damp.

This scrupulous care in handling ensures that your HOVIS reaches your table in the fresh, nourishing, appetising form which Nature intended

KEEP WELL-NOURISHED ON

HŌVIS

(TRADE MARK)

Your Baker Bakes it

HOVIS LTD., MACCLESFIELD

"A 2ᴰ BAR of CLARNICO MARZIPAN please!"

All Clarnico Confectionery is good Confectionery

CLARKE, NICKOLLS & COOMBS, LTD.,
Victoria Park, London.

MAY, 1925.

"Can you see him, Simmons?"
"Yes, m'lady."
"Then shoot if he moves a step."

The Awful Gladness Of the Mater

By

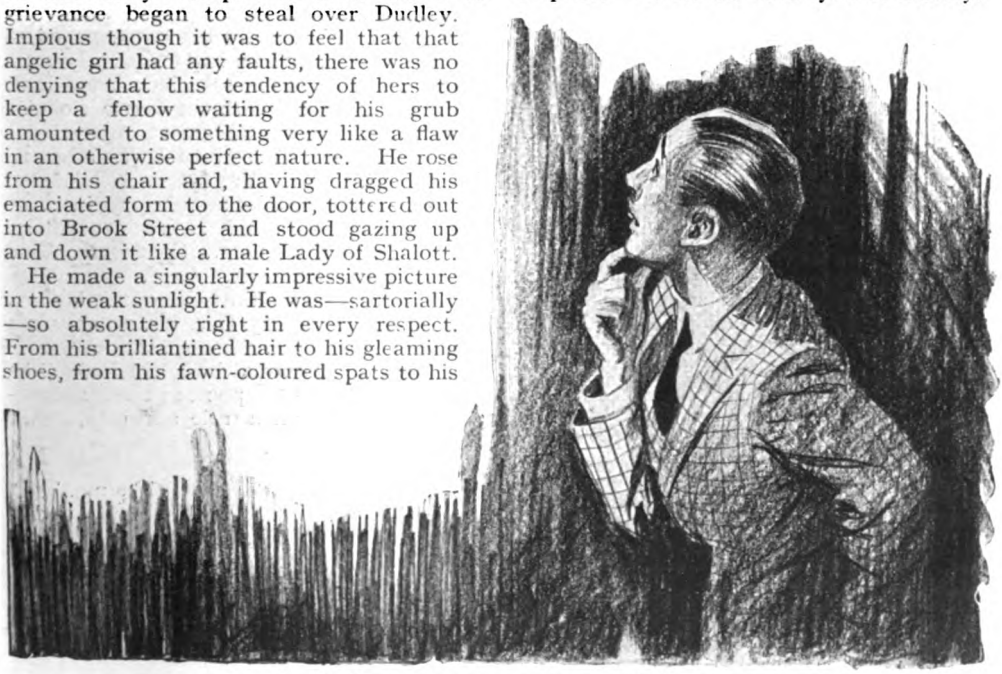
P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY TREYER EVANS

DUDLEY FINCH heaved a plaintive sigh. With the glazing eye of a starving man he looked once more at his watch. Five minutes past two was the time it registered, and Roberta Wickham had promised to meet him for lunch in the lobby of Claridge's at one-thirty sharp. A faint sense of grievance began to steal over Dudley. Impious though it was to feel that that angelic girl had any faults, there was no denying that this tendency of hers to keep a fellow waiting for his grub amounted to something very like a flaw in an otherwise perfect nature. He rose from his chair and, having dragged his emaciated form to the door, tottered out into Brook Street and stood gazing up and down it like a male Lady of Shalott.

He made a singularly impressive picture in the weak sunlight. He was—sartorially—so absolutely right in every respect. From his brilliantined hair to his gleaming shoes, from his fawn-coloured spats to his Old Etonian tie, he left no loophole to the sternest critic. You felt as you saw him that if this was the sort of chap who lunched at Claridge's, old man Claridge was in luck.

It was not admiration, however, that caused the earnest-looking young man in the soft hat to stop as he hurried by. It was surprise. He stared wide-eyed at Dudley.



Dudley peered upwards, appalled.
"I say!" he quavered. "It's only me, you know!"

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"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "I thought you were on your way to Australia."

"No," said Dudley Finch, "not on my way to Australia." His smooth forehead wrinkled in a frown. "Rolie, old thing," he said, with gentle reproach, "you oughtn't to go about London in a hat like that." Roland Attwater was his cousin, and a man does not like to see his relatives careering all over the Metropolis looking like tramp cyclists. "And your tie doesn't match your socks."

He shook his head sorrowfully. Roland was a literary man, and, worse, had been educated at an inferior school—Harrow, or some such name, Dudley understood that it was called; but even so he ought to have more proper feeling about the vital things of life.

"Never mind my hat," said Roland. "Why aren't you on your way to Aus tralia?"

"Oh, that's all right. Broadhurst had a cable, and isn't sailing till the fifteenth."

ROLAND ATTWATER looked relieved. Like all the more serious-minded members of the family, he was deeply concerned about his cousin's future. With regard to this there had been for some time past a little friction, a little difficulty in reconciling two sharply conflicting points of view. The family had wanted Dudley to go into his Uncle John's business in the City; whereas what Dudley desired was that some broad-minded sportsman should slip him a few hundred quid and enable him to start a new dance-club. A compromise had been effected when his godfather, Mr. Sampson Broadhurst, arriving suddenly from Australia, had offered to take the young man back with him and teach him sheep-farming. It fortunately happening that he was a great reader of the type of novel in which everyone who goes to Australia automatically amasses a large fortune and leaves it to the hero, Dudley had formally announced at a family council that—taking it by and large—Australia seemed to him a pretty good egg, and that he had no objection to having a pop at it.

"Thank goodness,'" said Roland. "I thought you might have backed out of going at the last moment."

Dudley smiled.

"Funny you should have said that, old man. A coincidence, I mean. Because that's just exactly what I've half made up my mind to do."

"What?"

"Absolutely. The fact is, Rolie," said Dudley, confidentially, "I've just met the most topping girl. And sometimes, when I think of buzzing off on the fifteenth and being separated from her by all those leagues of water, I could howl like a dog. I've a jolly good mind to let the old man sail by himself, and stick here on my native heath."

"This is appalling! You mustn't dream——"

"She's the most wonderful girl. Knows you, too. Roberta Wickham's her name. She lets me call her Bobbie. She——"

He broke off abruptly. His eyes, gazing past Roland, were shining with a holy light of devotion. His lips had parted in a brilliant smile.

"Yo-ho!" he cried.

Roland turned. A girl was crossing the road; a slim, boyish-looking girl, with shingled hair of a glorious red. She came tripping along with all the gay abandon of a woman who is forty minutes late for lunch and doesn't give a hoot.

"Yo-ho!" yowled young Mr. Finch. "Yo frightfully ho!"

The girl came up, smiling and debonair.

"I'm not late, am I?" she said.

"Rather not," cooed the love-sick Dudley. "Not a bit. Only just got here myself."

"That's good," said Miss Wickham. "How are you, Roland?"

"Very well, thanks," replied Roland Attwater, stiffly.

"I must congratulate you, mustn't I?"

"What on?" asked Dudley, puzzled.

"His engagement, of course."

"Oh, that!" said Dudley. He knew that his cousin had recently become engaged to Lucy Moresby, and he had frequently marvelled at the lack of soul which could have led one acquainted with the divine Roberta to go and tack himself on to any inferior female. He put it down to Roland having been at Harrow.

"I hope you will be very happy."

"Thank you," said Roland, sedately. "Well, I must be going. Good-bye. Glad to have seen you."

He stalked off towards Grosvenor Square. It seemed to Dudley that his manner was peculiar.

"Not a very cordial bird, old Rolie," he said, returning to the point at the luncheon-table. "Biffed off a trifle abruptly, didn't it strike you?"

Miss Wickham sighed.

"I'm afraid Roland doesn't like me."

"Not like you!" Dudley swallowed a potato which, in a calmer moment, he would have realized was some eighty degrees Fahrenheit too warm for mastication. "Not like you!" he repeated, with watering eyes. "The man must be an ass."

"We were great friends at one time," said Roberta, sadly. "But ever since that snake business——"

"Snake business?"

"Roland had a snake, and I took it with me when he came down to Hertfordshire for the week-end. And I put it in a man's bed, and the mater got the impression that Roland had done it, and he had to sneak away on a milk-train. He's never quite forgiven me, I'm afraid."

"But what else could you have done?" demanded Dudley, warmly. "I mean to say, if a fellow's got a snake, naturally you put it in some other fellow's bed."

"That's just what I felt."

"Only once in a blue moon, I mean, you get hold of a snake. When you do, you can't be expected to waste it."

"Exactly. Roland couldn't see that, though. Nor, for the matter of that," continued Miss Wickham, dreamily, "could mother."

"I say," said Dudley, "that reminds me. I'd like to meet your mother."

"Well, I'm going down there this evening. Why don't you come, too?"

"No, I say, really? May I?"

"Of course."

"Rather short notice, though, isn't it?"

"Oh, that's all right. I'll send the mater a wire. She'll be awfully glad to see you."

"You're sure?"

"Oh, rather! Awfully glad."

"Well, that's fine. Thanks ever so much."

"I'll motor you down."

Dudley hesitated. Something of the brightness died out of his fair young face. He had had experience of Miss Wickham as a chauffeuse and had died half-a-dozen deaths in the extremely brief space of time which it had taken her to thread her way through half a mile of traffic.

"If it's all the same," he said, nervously, "I think I'll pop down by train."

"Just as you like. The best one's the six-fifteen. Gets you there in time for dinner."

"Six-fifteen? Right. Liverpool Street, of course? Just bring a suit-case, I suppose? Fine! I say, you're really sure your mother won't think I'm butting in?"

"Of course not. She'll be awfully glad to see you."

"Splendid!" said Dudley.

"I'm not late, am I?" she said.
"Rather not," cooed the love-sick Dudley.

The Awful Gladness of the Mater

THE six-fifteen train was just about to draw out of Liverpool Street Station when Dudley flung himself and suit-case into it that evening. He had rather imprudently stepped in at the Drones Club on his way and, while having a brief refresher at the bar, had got into an interesting argument with a couple of the lads. There had only just been time for him to race to the cloak-room, retrieve his suit-case, and make a dash for the train. Fortunately, he had chanced upon an excellent taxi, and here he was, a little out of breath from the final sprint down the platform, but in every other respect absolutely all-righto. He leaned back against the cushions and gave himself up to thought.

From thinking of Bobbie he drifted shortly into meditation on her mother. If all went well, he felt this up-to-the-present-unmet mater was destined to be an important figure in his life. It was to her that he would have to go after Bobbie, hiding her face shyly on his waistcoat, had whispered that she had loved him from the moment they had met.

"You are very late," said Lady Wickham. "But perhaps
Dudley shook his head. "No," he said, "no flashlight
"Then how do you imagine you can take photographs

"Lady Wickham," he would say. "No, not Lady Wickham—mother!"

Yes, that was undoubtedly the way to start. After that it would be easy. Providing, of course, that the mater turned out to be one of the better class of maters and took to him from the beginning. He tried to picture Lady Wickham, and had evolved

a mental portrait of a gentle, sweet-faced woman of latish middle-age when the train pulled up at a station, and a lucky glimpse of a name on one of the lamps told Dudley that this was where he alighted.

you have brought a flashlight apparatus ? "
apparatus."
at this time of night ? "

Some twenty minutes later he was being relieved of his suit-case and shown into a room that looked like a study of sorts.

"The gentleman, m'lady," boomed the butler, and withdrew.

It was rather a rummy way of announcing the handsome guest, felt Dudley, but he was not able to give much thought to the matter, for from a chair in front of the desk at which she had been writing there now rose a most formidable person, at the sight of whom his heart missed a beat. So vivid had been that image of sweet-faced womanhood which he had fashioned that his hostess in the flesh had the effect of being a changeling.

In those amiable, gossipy Memoirs of the late Bingley Fox, Esq. ("Sixty Years of Society," Cook and Butterfield, 18s.), you will find it recorded that the widow of the eminent politician and Master of Hounds, Sir Apsley Wickham, was "one of three beautiful Miss Debenhams." But beauty, as it has been well said, is largely in the eye of the beholder, and it may be stated at once that Lady Wickham's particular type did not appeal to Dudley. He preferred the female eye to be a good deal less like a combination of gimlet and X-ray, and his taste in chins was something a little softer and not quite so reminiscent of a battleship going into action. Bobbie's mater might, as Bobbie had predicted, be awfully glad to see him, but she did not look it. And suddenly there came over him like a wave the realization that the check suit which he had selected so carefully was much too bright. At the tailor's, and subsequently at the Drones Club, it had had a pleasing and cheery effect, but here in this grim study he felt that it made him look like an absconding bookmaker.

"You are very late," said Lady Wickham.

"Late ? " quavered Dudley. The train had seemed to him to be making more or less good going.

"I supposed you would be here early in the afternoon. But perhaps you have brought a flashlight apparatus ? "

"Flashlight apparatus ? "

"Have you not brought a flashlight apparatus ? "

Dudley shook his head. He prided himself on being something of an authority on what the young visitor should take with him on country-house visits, but this was a new one.

"No," he said, "no flashlight apparatus."

"Then how," demanded Lady Wickham, with some heat, "do you imagine that you can take photographs at this time of night ? "

"Ah!" said Dudley, vaguely. "See what you mean, of course. Take a bit of doing, what?"

Lady Wickham seemed to become moderately resigned.

"Oh, well, I suppose they can send someone down to-morrow."

"That's right," said Dudley, brightening. "In the meantime—this is where I work."

"No, really?" said Dudley.

"Yes. All my books have been written at this desk."

"Fancy that!" said Dudley. He remembered having heard Bobbie mention that Lady Wickham wrote novels.

"I get my inspirations, however, in the garden for the most part. Generally the rose-garden. I like to sit there in the mornings and think."

"And what," agreed Dudley, cordially, "could be sweeter?"

His hostess regarded him curiously. A sense of something wrong seemed to come upon her.

"You *are* from *Milady's Boudoir?*" she asked, suddenly.

"From what was that, once again?" asked Dudley.

"Are you the man the editor of *Milady's Boudoir* was sending down to interview me?"

Dudley could answer this one.

"No," he said.

"No?" echoed Lady Wickham.

"Most absolutely not-o," said Dudley, firmly.

"Then who," demanded Lady Wickham, "are you?"

"My name's Dudley Finch."

"And to what," asked his hostess in a manner so extraordinarily like that of his late grandmother that Dudley's toes curled in their shoes, "am I to attribute the honour of this visit?"

Dudley blinked.

"Why, I thought you knew all about it."

"I know nothing whatever about it."

"Didn't Bobbie send you a wire?"

"He did not. Nor do I know who Bobbie may be."

"Miss Wickham, I mean. Your daughter Roberta. She told me to buzz down here for the night, and said she would send you a wire paving the way, so to speak. Oh, I say, this is a bit thick. Fancy her forgetting!"

For the second time that day a disagreeable feeling that his idol was after all not entirely perfect stole upon Dudley. A girl, he meant, oughtn't to lure a bloke down to her mater's house and then forget to send a wire tipping the old girl off. No, he meant to say! Pretty dashed casual, he meant.

"Oh," said Lady Wickham, "you are a friend of my daughter?"

"Absolutely."

"I see. And where is Roberta?"

"She's tooling down in the car."

Lady Wickham clicked her tongue.

"Roberta is becoming too erratic for endurance," she said.

"I say, you know," said Dudley, awkwardly, "if I'm in the way, you know, just speak the word and I'll race off to the local pub. I mean to say, don't want to butt in, I mean."

"Not at all, Mr.——"

"Finch."

"Not at all, Mr. Finch. I am only too delighted," said Lady Wickham, looking at him as if he were a particularly loathsome slug which had interrupted some beautiful reverie of hers in the rose-garden, "that you were able to come." She touched the bell. "Oh, Simmons," she said, as the butler appeared, "in which room did you put Mr. Finch's luggage?"

"In the Blue Room, m'lady."

"Then perhaps you will show him the way there. He will wish to dress. Dinner," she added to Dudley, "will be at eight o'clock."

"Righto!" said Dudley. He was feeling a little happier now. Formidable old bird as this old bird undoubtedly was, he was pretty confident that she would melt a bit when once he had got the good old dress-clothes draped about his person. He was prepared to stand or fall by his dress-clothes. There are a number of tailors in London who can hack up a bit of broadcloth and sew it together in some sort of shape, but there is only one who can construct a dress-suit so that it blends with the figure and seems as beautiful as a summer's dawn. It was this tailor who enjoyed the benefit of Dudley's patronage. Yes, Dudley felt as he entered the Blue Room, in about twenty minutes old Madame Lafarge was due to get her eye knocked out.

In the brief instant before he turned on the light he could dimly see that perfect suit laid out on the bed, and it was with something of the feeling of a wanderer returning home that he pressed the switch.

LIGHT flooded the room, and Dudley stood there blinking.

But, no matter how much he blinked, the awful sight which had met his eyes refused to change itself in the slightest detail. What was laid out on the bed was not his dress-clothes, but the most ghastly collection of raiment he had ever beheld. He blinked once again as a forlorn hope, and then tottered forward.

He stood looking down at the foul things,

his heart ice within him. Reading from left to right, the objects on the bed were as follows: A pair of short white woollen socks; a crimson made-up bow-tie of enormous size; a sort of middy-blouse arrangement; a pair of blue velvet knickerbockers; and finally—and it was this that seemed to Dudley to make it all so sad and hopeless—a very small sailor-hat with a broad blue ribbon, across which in large white letters ran the legend "H.M.S. *Indefatigable.*"

On the floor were a pair of brown shoes with strap-and-buckle attachment. They seemed to be roomy number twelves.

Dudley sprang to the bell. A footman presented himself.

"Sir?" said the footman.

"What," demanded Dudley, wildly, "what is all this?"

What was laid out on the bed was the most ghastly collection of raiment he had ever beheld.
"What," demanded Dudley, wildly, "what is all this?"

"I found them in your suit-case, sir."

"But where are my dress-clothes?"

"No dress-clothes in the suit-case, sir."

A bright light shone upon Dudley. That argument with those two birds at the Drones had, he now recalled, been on the subject of fancy-dress. Both birds were dashing off to a fancy-dress ball that night, and one bird had appealed to Dudley to support him against the other bird in his contention that at these affairs the prudent man played for safety and went as a Pierrot. The second bird had said that he would sooner be dead in a ditch than don any such unimaginative costume. He was going as a small boy, he said, and with a pang Dudley remembered having laughed mockingly and prophesied that he would look the most priceless ass. And then he had sprinted off and collared the man's bag in mistake for his own.

"Look here," he said, "I can't possibly come down to dinner in those!"

"No, sir?" said the footman, respectfully, but with a really inhuman lack of interest and sympathy.

"You'd better leg it to the old girl's room—— I mean," said Dudley, recollecting himself, "you had better go to Lady Wickham and inform her that Mr. Finch presents his compliments and I'm awfully sorry but he has mislaid his dress-clothes, so he will have to come down to dinner in what I've got on at present."

"Very good, sir."

"I say!" A horrid thought struck Dudley. "I say, we shall be alone, what?

I mean to say, nobody else is coming to dinner ? "

" Yes, sir," said the footman, brightly. " A number of guests are expected, sir."

It was a sagging and demoralized Dudley who crawled into the dining-room a quarter of an hour later. In spite of what moralists say, a good conscience is not enough in itself to enable a man to bear himself jauntily in every crisis of life. Dudley had had a good upbringing, and the fact that he was dining at a strange house in a bright check suit gave him a consciousness of sin which he strove vainly to overcome.

The irony of it was that in a normal frame of mind he would have sneered loftily at the inferior garments which clothed the other male members of the party. On the left sleeve of the man opposite him was a disgraceful wrinkle. The fellow next to the girl in pink might have a good heart, but the waistcoat which covered it did not fit by a mile. And as for the tie of that other bloke down by Lady Wickham, it was not a tie at all in the deeper meaning of the word ; it was just a deplorable occurrence. Yet, situated as he was, his heart ached with envy of all these tramps.

He ate but little. As a rule his appetite was of the heartiest, and many a novel had he condemned as untrue to life on the ground that its hero was stated to have pushed his food away untasted. Until to-night he had never supposed that such a feat was possible. But as course succeeded course he found himself taking almost no practical interest in the meal. All he asked was to get it over, so that he could edge away and be alone with his grief. There would doubtless be some sort of binge in the drawing-room after dinner, but it would not have the support of Dudley Finch. For Dudley Finch the quiet seclusion of the Blue Room.

IT was as he was sitting there some two hours later that there drifted into his mind something Roberta had said about Roland Attwater leaving on the milk-train. At the time he had paid little attention to the remark, but now it began to be borne in upon him more and more strongly that this milk-train was going to be of great strategic importance in his life. This ghastly house was just the sort of house that fellows did naturally go away from on milk-trains, and it behoved him to be prepared.

He rang the bell once more.

" Sir ? " said the footman.

" I say," said Dudley, " what time does the milk-train leave ? "

" Milk-train, sir ? "

" Yes. Train that takes the milk, you know."

" Do you wish for milk, sir ? "

" No ! " Dudley fought down a desire to stun this man with one of the number twelve shoes. " I just want to know what time the milk-train goes in the morning—in case —in—er—case I am called away unexpectedly, I mean to say."

" I will inquire, sir."

The footman made his way to the servants' hall, the bearer of great news.

" Guess what," said the footman.

" Well, Thomas ? " asked Simmons the butler, indulgently.

" That bloke—the Great What-is-it," said Thomas—for it was by this affectionate sobriquet that Dudley was now known below stairs—" is planning to go off on the milk-train ! "

" What ? " Simmons heaved his stout form out of his chair. His face did not reflect the gay mirth of his subordinate. " I must inform her ladyship. I must inform her ladyship at once."

The last guest had taken his departure and Lady Wickham was preparing to go to a well-earned bed when there entered to her Simmons, grave and concerned.

" Might I speak to your ladyship ? "

" Well, Simmons ? "

" Might I first take the liberty of inquiring, m'lady, if the—er—the young gentleman in the tweed suit is a personal friend of your ladyship's ? "

Lady Wickham was surprised. It was not like Simmons to stroll in and start chatting about her guests, and for a moment she was inclined to say as much ; then something told her that by doing so she would miss information of interest.

" He says he is a friend of Miss Roberta, Simmons," she said, graciously.

" Says ! " said the butler, and there was no eluding the sinister meaning in his voice.

" What do you mean, Simmons ? "

" Begging your pardon, m'lady, I am convinced that this person is here with some criminal intention. Thomas reports that his suit-case contained a complete disguise."

" Disguise ! What sort of disguise ? "

" Thomas did not convey that very clearly, your ladyship, but I understand that it was of a juvenile nature. And just now, m'lady, the man has been making inquiries as to the time of departure of the milk-train."

" Milk-train ! "

" Thomas also states, m'lady, that the man was visibly took aback when he learned that there were guests expected here to-night. If you ask me, your ladyship, it was the man's intention to make what I might term a quick clean-up immediately after dinner and escape on the nine-fifty-seven. Foiled in that by the presence of the guests, he is going to endeavour to collect

the swag in the small hours and get away on the milk-train."

"Simmons!"

"That is my opinion, your ladyship."

"Good gracious! He told me that Miss Roberta had said to him that she was coming down here to-night. She has not come!"

"A ruse, m'lady. To inspire confidence."

"Simmons," said Lady Wickham, rising to the crisis like the strong woman she was, "you must sit up to-night!"

"With a gun, m'lady," cried the butler, with a sportsman's enthusiasm.

"Yes, with a gun. And if you hear him prowling about you must come and wake me instantly."

"Very good, your ladyship."

"You must be very quiet, of course."

"Like a mouse, your ladyship," said Simmons.

DUDLEY, meanwhile, in his refuge in the Blue Room, had for some time past been regretting—every moment more keenly—that preoccupation with his troubles had led him to deal so sparingly with his food down there in the dining-room. The peace of the Blue Room had soothed his nervous system, and with calm had come the realization that he was most confoundedly hungry. There was something uncanny in the way Fate had worked to do him out of his proper supply of proteins and carbohydrates to-day. Hungry as he had been when waiting at Claridge's for Bobbie, the moment she appeared love had taken his mind off the menu, and he had made a singularly light lunch. Since then he had had nothing but the few scattered mouthfuls which he had forced himself to swallow at the dinner-table.

He consulted his watch. It was later than he had supposed. Much too late to ring the bell and ask for sandwiches—even supposing that his standing in this poisonous house had been such as to justify the demand.

He flung himself back on the bed and tried to doze off. That footman fellow had said that the milk-train left at three-fifteen, and he was firmly resolved to catch it. The sooner he was out of this place, the better. Meanwhile, he craved food. Any sort of food. His entire interior organism was up on its feet, shouting wildly for sustenance.

A few minutes later, Lady Wickham, waiting tensely in her room, was informed by a knock on the door that the hour had arrived.

"Yes?" she whispered; turning the handle noiselessly and putting her head out.

"The man, m'lady," breathed the voice of Simmons in the darkness.

"Prowling?"

"Yes, m'lady."

Dudley Finch's unwilling hostess was a woman of character and decision. From girlhood up she had been accustomed to hunting and the other hardy sports of the aristocracy of the countryside. And though the pursuit of burglars had formed up to the present no part of her experience, she approached it without a qualm. Motioning the butler to follow, she wrapped her dressing-gown more closely about her and strode down the corridor.

There was plenty of noise to guide her to her goal. Dudley's progress from his bedroom to the dining-room, the fruit and biscuits on the sideboard of which formed his objective, had been far from quiet. Once he had tripped over a chair, and now, as his hostess and her attendant began to descend the stairs, he collided with and upset a large screen. He was endeavouring to remove the foot which he had inadvertently put through this when a quiet voice spoke from above.

"Can you see him, Simmons?"

"Yes, m'lady. Dimly but adequately."

"Then shoot if he moves a step."

"Very good, m'lady."

Dudley wrenched his foot free and peered upwards, appalled.

"I say!" he quavered. "It's only me, you know!"

Light flooded the hall.

"Only me!" repeated Dudley, feverishly. The sight of the enormous gun in the butler's hands had raised his temperature to a painful degree.

"What," demanded Lady Wickham, coldly, "are you doing here, Mr. Finch?"

An increased sense of the delicacy of his position flooded over Dudley. He was a young man with the nicest respect for the conventions, and he perceived that the situation required careful handling. It is not tactful, he realized, for a guest for whose benefit a hostess has only a few hours earlier provided a lavish banquet to announce to the said hostess that he has been compelled by hunger to rove the house in search of food. For a moment he stood there, licking his lips; then something like an inspiration came to him.

"The fact is," he said, "I couldn't sleep, you know."

"Possibly," said Lady Wickham, "you would have a better chance of doing so if you were to go to bed. Is it your intention to walk about the house all night?"

"No, no, absolutely not. I couldn't sleep, so I—er—I thought I would pop down and see if I could find something to read, don't you know."

"Oh, you want a book?"

"That's right. That's absolutely it. A book. You've put it in a nutshell."

"I will show you to the library."

In spite of her stern disapproval of this scoundrel, who wormed his way into people's houses in quest of loot, a slight diminution of austerity came to Lady Wickham as the result of this introduction of the literary note. She was an indefatigable novelist, and it pleased her to place her works in the hands of even the vilest. Ushering Dudley into the library, she switched on the light and made her way without hesitation to the third shelf from the top nearest the fireplace. Selecting one from a row of brightly covered volumes, she offered it to him.

"Perhaps this will interest you," she said.

Dudley eyed it dubiously.

"Oh, I say," he protested, "I don't know, you know. This is one of that chap, George Masterman's."

"Well?" said Lady Wickham, frostily.

"He writes the most frightful bilge, I mean. Don't you think so?"

"I cannot say that I do. I am possibly biased, however, by the fact that George Masterman is the name I write under."

Dudley blinked.

"Oh, do you?" he babbled. "Do you? You do, eh? Well, I mean——" An imperative desire to be elsewhere swept over him. "This'll do me," he said, grabbing wildly at the nearest shelf. "This will do me fine. Thanks awfully. Good night. I mean, thanks, thanks. I mean good night. Good night."

Two pairs of eyes followed him as he shot up the stairs. Lady Wickham's were cold and hard; the expression in those of Simmons was wistful. It was seldom that the butler's professional duties allowed him the opportunity of indulging the passion for sport which had been his since boyhood. A very occasional pop at a rabbit was about all the shooting he got nowadays, and the receding Dudley made his mouth water. He fought the craving down with a sigh.

"A nasty fellow, m'lady," he said.

"Quick-witted," Lady Wickham was forced to concede.

"Full of low cunning, m'lady," emended the butler. "All that about wanting a book. A ruse."

"You had better continue watching, Simmons."

"Most decidedly, your ladyship."

Dudley sat on his bed, panting. Nothing like this had ever happened to him before, and for a while the desire for food left him, overcome by a more spiritual misery. If there was one thing in the world that gave him the pip, it was looking like a silly idiot; and every nerve in his body told him that during the recent interview he must have looked the most perfect silly idiot Staring bleakly before him, he re-lived every moment of the blighted scene, and the more he examined his own share in it the worse it looked. He quivered in an agony of shame. He seemed to be bathed from head to foot in a sort of prickly heat.

AND then, faintly at first but growing stronger every moment, hunger began to clamour once again.

Dudley clenched his teeth. Something must be done to combat this. Mind must somehow be enabled to triumph over matter. He glanced at the book which he had snatched from the shelf, and for the first time that night began to feel that Fate was with him. Out of a library which was probably congested with the most awful tosh, he had stumbled first pop upon Mark Twain's "Tramp Abroad," a book which he had not read since he was a kid but had always been meaning to read again; just the sort of book, in fact, which would enable a fellow to forget the anguish of starvation until that milk-train went.

He opened it at random, and found with a shock that Fate had but been playing with him.

"*It has now been many months, at the present writing*" (read Dudley), "*since I have had a nourishing meal, but I shall soon have one—a modest, private affair, all to myself. I have selected a few dishes, and made out a little bill of fare, which will go home in the steamer that precedes me and be hot when I arrive—as follows:—*"

Dudley quailed. Memories of his boyhood came to him, of the time when he had first read what came after those last two words. The passage had stamped itself on his mind, for he had happened upon it at school, at a time when he was permanently obsessed by a wolfish hunger and too impecunious to purchase anything at the school shop to keep him going till the next meal. It had tortured him then, and it would, he knew, torture him even more keenly now.

Nothing, he resolved, should induce him to go on reading. So he immediately went on.

"*Radishes. Baked apples, with cream.*
"*Fried oysters; stewed oysters. Frogs.*
"*American coffee, with real cream.*
"*American butter.*
"*Fried chicken, Southern style.*
"*Porterhouse steak.*
"*Saratoga potatoes.*
"*Broiled chicken, American style.*"

A feeble moan escaped Dudley. He en-

deavoured to close the book, but it would not close. He tried to remove his eyes from the page, but they wandered back like homing pigeons.

" *Brook trout, from Sierra Nevadas.*
" *Lake trout, from Tahoe.*
" *Sheephead and croakers, from New Orleans.*
" *Black bass, from the Mississippi.*
" *American roast beef.*
" *Roast turkey, Thanksgiving style.*
" *Cranberry sauce. Celery.*
" *Roast wild turkey. Woodcock.*
" *Canvas-back duck, from Baltimore.*
" *Prairie hens, from Illinois.*
" *Missouri partridges, broiled.*
" *'Possum. Coon.*
" *Boston bacon and beans.*
" *Bacon and greens, Southern style.*"

Dudley rose from the bed. He could endure no more. His previous experience as a prospector after food had not been such as to encourage further efforts in that direction, but there comes a time when a man recks not of possible discomfort. He removed his shoes and tip-toed out of the room. A familiar form advanced to meet him along the now brightly lit corridor.

" Well ? " said Simmons, the butler, shifting his gun to the ready and massaging the trigger with a loving forefinger.

Dudley gazed upon him with a sinking heart.

" Oh, hullo ! " he said.

" What do *you* want ? "

" Oh—er—oh, nothing."

" You get back into that room."

" I say, listen, laddie," said Dudley, in desperation flinging reticence to the winds. " I'm starving. Absolutely starving. I wish, like a good old bird, you would just scud down to your pantry or somewhere and get me a sandwich or two."

" You get back into that room, you hound ! " growled Simmons, with such intensity that sheer astonishment sent Dudley tottering back through the door. He had never heard a butler talk like that. He had not supposed that butlers could talk like that.

He put on his shoes again ; and, lacing them up, brooded tensely on this matter. What, he asked himself, was the idea ? What was the big thought that lay behind all this ? That his hostess, alarmed by noises in the night, should have summoned the butler to bring firearms to her assistance was intelligible. But what was the blighter doing, camping outside his door ? After all, they knew he was a friend of the daughter of the house.

HE was still wrestling with this problem when a curious, sharp, tapping noise attracted his attention. It came at irregular intervals and seemed to proceed from the direction of the window. He sat up, listening. It came again. He crept to the window and looked out. As he did so, something with hard edges smote him painfully in the face.

" Oh, sorry ! " said a voice.

Dudley started violently. Looking in the direction from which the voice had proceeded, he perceived that there ran out from the wall immediately to the left of his window a small balcony. On this balcony, bathed in silver moonlight, Roberta Wickham was standing. She was hauling in the slack of a length of string, to the end of which was attached a button-hook.

" Awfully sorry," she said. " I was trying to attract your attention."

" You did," said Dudley.

" I thought you might be asleep."

" Asleep ! " Dudley's face contorted itself in a dreadful sneer. " Does anyone ever get any sleep in this house ? " He leaned forward and lowered his voice. " I say, your bally butler has gone off his onion."

" What ? "

" He's doing sentinel duty outside my door with a whacking great cannon. And when I put my head out just now he simply barked at me."

" I'm afraid," said Bobbie, gathering in the button-hook, " he thinks you're a burglar."

" A burglar ? But I told your mother distinctly that I was a friend of yours."

Something akin to embarrassment seemed to come upon the not easily embarrassed Miss Wickham.

" Yes, I want to talk to you about that," she said. " It was like this."

" I say, when did you arrive, by the way ? " asked Dudley, the question suddenly presenting itself to his disordered mind.

" About half an hour ago."

" What ! "

" Yes. I sneaked in through the scullery window. And the first thing I met was mother in her dressing-gown." Miss Wickham shivered a little as at some unpleasing memory. " You've never seen mother in her dressing-gown," she said, in a small voice.

" Yes, I have," retorted Dudley. " And while it may be an experience which every chappie ought to have, let me tell you that once is sufficient."

" I had an accident coming down here," proceeded Miss Wickham, absorbed in her own story and paying small attention to his. " An idiot of a man driving a dray let me

run into him. My car was all smashed up. I couldn't get away for hours, and then I had to come down on a train that stopped at every station."

It is proof, if such were needed, of the strain to which Dudley Finch had been subjected that night that the information that this girl had been in a motor-smash did not cause him that anguished concern which he would undoubtedly have felt twenty-four hours earlier. It left him almost cold.

"Well, when you saw your mother," he said, "didn't you tell her that I was a friend of yours?"

Miss Wickham hesitated.

"That's the part I want to explain," she said. "You see, it was like this. First I had to break it as gently as I could to her that the car wasn't insured. She wasn't frightfully pleased. And then she told me about you and—— Dudley, old thing, whatever have you been doing since you got here? The mater seemed to think you had been behaving in the weirdest way."

"I'll admit that I brought the wrong bag and couldn't dress for dinner, but apart from that I'm dashed if I can see what I did that was weird."

"Well, she seems to have become frightfully suspicious of you almost from the start."

"If you had sent that wire, telling her I was coming——" Miss Wickham clicked her tongue regretfully.

"I knew there was something I had forgotten. Oh, Dudley, I'm awfully sorry."

"Don't mention it," said Dudley, bitterly. "It's probably going to lead to my having my head blown off by a looney butler, but don't give it another thought. You were saying——"

"Oh, yes, when I met mother. You do see, Dudley dear, how terribly difficult it was for me, don't you? I mean, I had just broken it to her that the car was all smashed up and not insured, and then she suddenly asked me if it was true that I had invited you down here. I was just going to say I had, when she began to talk about you in such a bitter spirit that somehow the time didn't seem ripe. So when she asked me if you were a friend of mine, I——"

"You said I was?"

"Well, not in so many words."

"How do you mean?"

"I had to be awfully tactful, you see."

"Well?"

"So I told her I had never seen you in my life."

Dudley uttered a sound like the breeze sighing in the tree-trops.

"But it's all right," went on Miss Wickham, reassuringly.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Dudley. "I noticed that."

"I'm going to go and have a talk with Simmons and tell him he must let you escape. Then everything will be splendid. There's an excellent milk-train——"

"I know all about the milk-train, thanks."

"I'll go and see him now. So don't you worry, old thing."

"Worry?" said Dudley. "Me? What have I got to worry about?"

BOBBIE disappeared. Dudley turned away from the window. Faint whispering made itself heard from the passage. Somebody tapped softly on the door. Dudley opened it and found the ambassadress standing on the mat. Farther down the corridor, tactfully withdrawn into the background, Simmons the butler stood grounding arms.

"Dudley," whispered Miss Wickham, "have you got any money on you?"

"Yes, a certain amount."

"Five pounds? It's for Simmons."

Dudley felt the militant spirit of the Finches surging within him. His blood boiled.

"You don't mean to say that after what has happened the blighter has the crust to expect me to tip him?"

He glared past her at the man behind the gun, who simpered respectfully. Evidently Bobbie's explanations had convinced him that he had wronged Dudley, for the hostility which had been so marked a short while back had now gone out of his manner.

"Well, it's like this, you see," said Bobbie. "Poor Simmons is worried."

"I'm glad," said Dudley, vindictively. "I wish he would worry himself into a decline."

"He's afraid that mother may be angry with him when she finds that you have gone. He doesn't want to lose his place."

"A man who doesn't want to get out of a place like this must be an ass."

"And so, in case mother does cut up rough and dismiss him for not keeping a better watch over you, he wants to feel that he has something in hand. He started by asking for a tenner, but I got him down to five. So hand it over, Dudley dear, and then we can get action."

Dudley produced a five-pound note and gazed at it with a long, lingering look of affection and regret.

"Here you are," he said. "I hope the man spends it on drink, gets tight, trips over his feet, and breaks his neck!"

"Thanks," said Bobbie. "There's just one other trifling condition he made, but you needn't worry about that."

"What was it?"

"Oh, just something very trifling. Nothing

that you have to do. No need for you to worry at all. You had better start now tying knots in the sheets."

Dudley stared.

"Knots?" he said. "In the sheets?"

"To climb down by."

It was Dudley's guiding rule in life never, when once he had got it brushed and brilliantined and properly arranged in the fashionable back-sweep, to touch his hair; but on this fearful night all the rules of civilized life were going by the board. He clutched upwards, collected a handful, and churned it about. No lesser gesture could have expressed his consternation.

"You aren't seriously suggesting that I climb out of window and shin down a knotted sheet?" he gasped.

"You must, I'm afraid. Simmons insists on it."

"Why?"

"Well——"

Dudley groaned.

"I know why," he said, bitterly. "He's been going to the movies. It's always the way. You give a butler an evening off and he sneaks out to a picture-house and comes back with a diseased mind, thinking he's playing a star part in 'The Clutching Hand' or something. Knotted sheets, indeed!" Such was his emotion that Dudley very nearly said "Forsooth"! "The man is simply a drivelling imbecile. Will you kindly inform me why, in the name of everything infernal, the poor, silly, dashed fish can't just let me out of the front door like an ordinary human being?"

"Did you say 'ha, ha'?" said Dudley.
"I did venture——"
"Don't do it again."

"Why, don't you see?" reasoned Miss Wickham. "How could he explain to mother? She must be made to think that you escaped in spite of his vigilance."

Disordered though his faculties were, Dudley could dimly see that there was something in this. He made no further objections. Bobbie beckoned to the waiting Simmons. Money changed hands. The butler passed amiably into the room to lend assistance to the preparations.

"A little tighter, perhaps, sir," he suggested, obsequiously, casting a critical eye upon Dudley's knots. "It would never do for you to fall and kill yourself, sir, ha, ha!"

"Did you say 'ha, ha'?" said Dudley, in a pale voice.

"I did venture——"

"Don't do it again."

"Very good, sir." The butler ambled to the window and looked out. "I fear the sheets will not reach quite to the ground, sir. You will have a drop of a few feet."

"But," added Bobbie, hastily, "you've got the most lovely, soft, squashy flower-bed to fall into."

It was not till some minutes later, when he had come to the end of the sheet and had at last nerved himself to let go and complete the journey after the fashion of a parachutist whose parachute has refused to open, that Dudley discovered that there was an error in Miss Wickham's description of the terrain. The lovely soft flower-bed of which she had spoken with such pretty girlish enthusiasm was certainly there, but what she had omitted to mention was that along it at regular intervals were planted large bushes of a hard and spiky nature. It was in one of these that Dudley, descending like a shooting star, found himself entangled: and he had never supposed that anything that was not actually a cactus plant could possibly have so many and such sharp thorns.

He scrambled out and stood in the moonlight, soliloquizing softly. A head protruded from the window above.

"Are you all right, sir?" inquired the voice of Simmons.

Dudley did not reply. With as much dignity as a man punctured in several hundred places could muster, he strode off.

He had reached the drive and was limping up it towards the gate which led to the road which led to the station which led to the milk-train which led to London, when the quiet of the night was suddenly shattered by the roar of a gun. Something infinitely more painful than all the thorns which had recently pierced him smote the fleshy part of his left leg. It seemed to be red-hot, and its effect on Dudley was almost miraculous. A moment before he had been slouching slowly along, a beaten and jaded man. He now appeared to become electrified. With one sharp yell he lowered the amateur record for the standing broad jump, and then, starting smartly off the mark, proceeded to try to beat the best professional time for the hundred-yard dash.

THE telephone at the side of Dudley's bed had been ringing for some time before its noise woke him. Returning to his rooms in Jermyn Street shortly before seven a.m., he had quelled his great hunger with breakfast and then slipped with a groan between the sheets. It was now, he saw from a glance at his watch, nearly five in the afternoon.

"Hullo?" he croaked.

"Dudley?"

It was a voice which twenty-four hours ago would have sent sharp thrills down the young man's spine. Twenty-four hours ago, if he had heard this voice on his telephone, he would have squealed with rapture. Hearing it now, he merely frowned. The heart beneath that rose-pink pyjama jacket was dead.

"Yes?" he said, coldly.

"Oh, Dudley," purred Miss Wickham, "are you all right?"

"As far," replied Mr. Finch, frigidly, "as a bloke can be said to be all right whose hair has turned white to the roots and who has been starved and chucked out of windows into bushes with six-inch thorns, and chivvied and snootered and shot in the fleshy part of the leg——"

An exclamation of concern broke in upon his eloquence.

"Oh, Dudley, he didn't hit you?"

"He did hit me."

"But he promised that he wouldn't aim at you."

"Well, next time he goes shooting visitors, tell him to aim as carefully as he can. Then they may have a sporting chance."

"Is there anything I can do?"

"Outside of bringing me the blighter's head on a charger, nothing, thanks."

"He insisted on letting off the gun. That was the condition I said he had made. You remember?"

"I remember. The trifling condition I wasn't to worry about."

"It was to make the thing seem all right to mother."

"I hope your mother was pleased," said Dudley, politely.

"Dudley, I do wish there was something I could do for you. I'd like to come up and nurse you. But I'm in disgrace about the car, and I'm not allowed to come to London just yet. I'm 'phoning from the Wickham Arms. I believe I shall be able to get up, though, by Saturday week. Shall I come then?"

"Do," said Dudley, cordially.

"That's splendid! It's the seventeenth. All right, I'll try to get to London latish in the morning. Where shall we meet?"

"We sha'n't meet," said Dudley. "At lunch-time on the seventeenth I shall be tooling off to Australia. Good-bye!"

He hung up the receiver and crawled back into bed, thinking imperially.

THE CHALCEDONY HORSE

By

EDGAR JEPSON

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

LITTLE Miss Timmins was polishing the jade vase gloomily. Yet it was a very beautiful vase, and as a rule a joy to her. Gloomily her eyes wandered from her task over the glass-fronted ebony cabinets, on the shelves and tops of which were figures and bowls and vases and cups and gongs and discs of jade and chalcedony and agate, of rose and amethyst quartz, of clear and smoky crystal, of realgar and ultramarine and lapis-lazuli, in that paradise of lovers of beauty of form and colour, Sir Charles Goulceby's collection of Chinese hard stone.

As a rule little Miss Timmins was fairly content, though she missed business battles, in her job of curator and guardian of this collection. In her father's antique shop in Devonshire Street, Red Lion Square, she had grown up with beautiful things; as a small girl she had helped to keep them; as a not much bigger girl she had bought and sold them. She had come to have an astonishing flair for the fine thing and for the fake; not the least of her duties was to advise Sir Charles about additions to his collection.

But this morning her task was not a joy to her; she had an unpleasant sense of being in the painful grip of circumstance. Her father had promised to be at Sir Charles's at half-past nine that morning with the instalment of the three hundred pounds which Sir Charles had lent them to save them from being sold up, and the quarter's interest on it. It was now nearly eleven; he had not come.

Then the door opened and Sir Charles, a tall, thin man of sixty, with the high-arched Goulceby nose, a small, thin-lipped, mean mouth, a small, rounded chin, came bustling in with an air of triumph. He carried a small brown-paper parcel and was unwrapping it as he came.

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" A find, Miss Timmins ! A real find ! A mirror black vase ! Small, but of very fine quality ! " he cried in jubilant and excited accents ; and his voice was high and squeaky.

Miss Timmins showed no gratification at the news. She cherished no longer any gratitude to Sir Charles for helping them out of their plight. She had found him out. His noble action was paying him very well indeed ; he would get the three hundred pounds back in eighteen months and ninety pounds in addition. Also, during that eighteen months he would get her services—she had already, at the end of six months, saved him nearly seven hundred pounds—for two pounds ten a week.

She said in unbelieving accents : " A mirror black vase, Sir Charles ? "

" Yes. And I got it for eighteen pounds ! At Huggins's—in Oxford Street—I should have got it for eighteen shillings, if he hadn't seen I was so keen on it. Thank goodness, he didn't know what it was."

" You got it off Huggins ? A mirror black vase for eighteen pounds ? " said Miss Timmins in yet more incredulous accents. " But what Red Huggins doesn't know about china isn't worth knowing. Are you sure it's all right ? "

" Of course I'm sure it's all right ! " snapped Sir Charles, scornfully. " Do you think I could make a mistake about mirror black ? Besides, he'd got it stuck on a shelf at the back of the shop among a lot of Staffordshire rubbish."

" That's where Huggins would stick it," said Miss Timmins, with a darkling air. " Directly he saw you coming," she added, unkindly.

" Look at it ! Look at it ! " cried Sir Charles, in shrill exasperation. And he thrust it at her.

She examined it carefully. Sir Charles watched her face for the look of admiration. It did not come. She flicked the vase with her finger-nail to get the ring ; then she frowned at it.

" It is a dud, Sir Charles," she said coldly ; there was the faintest note of satisfaction in her voice.

" Nonsense ! " he snapped. " Nonsense ! "

" You ought to have telephoned to me to come and look at it before you bought it. That's one of the things you pay me for, isn't it ? " she said, severely.

" I tell you it's genuine ! I'm certain of it ! " he clamoured, shrilly.

" It isn't Chinese at all," said Miss Timmins, with a kind of inexorable decision. " It isn't even a Japanese fake. It's French. And it's a good fake too—first-class. I'd bet anything that it comes from that factory where they fake the Blue Worcester so well. I was taken in by a piece of that myself—once."

" Nonsense ! Nonsense ! " said Sir Charles again, but in less assured accents. " You're wrong. I'll take it to South Kensington and see what they say about it."

" Do," said Miss Timmins, in a tone of the coldest indifference. " Not that it makes any difference what they say about it. It's a French fake."

Sir Charles gazed at her with an expression of pure malignity. She caught him doing so and remained unaffected : nothing that he could do now could add to her dislike of him.

THE door opened ; the butler ushered in Lord Scredington, a cheerful and wicked young nobleman, whom Miss Timmins believed to be her *bête noire* because of his lack of respect for her.

" How are you, uncle ? " he said, with a cheeriness which was certainly not called forth by Sir Charles's scowl of greeting. " I came in to consult your invaluable curator about a piece, or I should say a lump, of chalcedony I have just bought. How are you, Miss Timmins ? "

" I'm very well, thank you," said Miss Timmins, with a certain stiffness.

Had not Sir Charles been present, he would probably have addressed her as " Baby darling " or " Beulah darling." She thought it cheek—great cheek.

" You're always wasting Miss Timmins's time," said Sir Charles, sourly.

" Never ! " exclaimed his nephew, indignantly. " I'm of the greatest help to her. I cheer her in her toil. But it's a good thing in some ways you're here, uncle—you'll like to see this piece yourself. You haven't got anything to touch it ; and you never will have—not if you go on collecting for another hundred years."

As he spoke he set the attaché-case he was carrying on the table at which Miss Timmins sat, opened it, and lifted out of it a chalcedony horse.

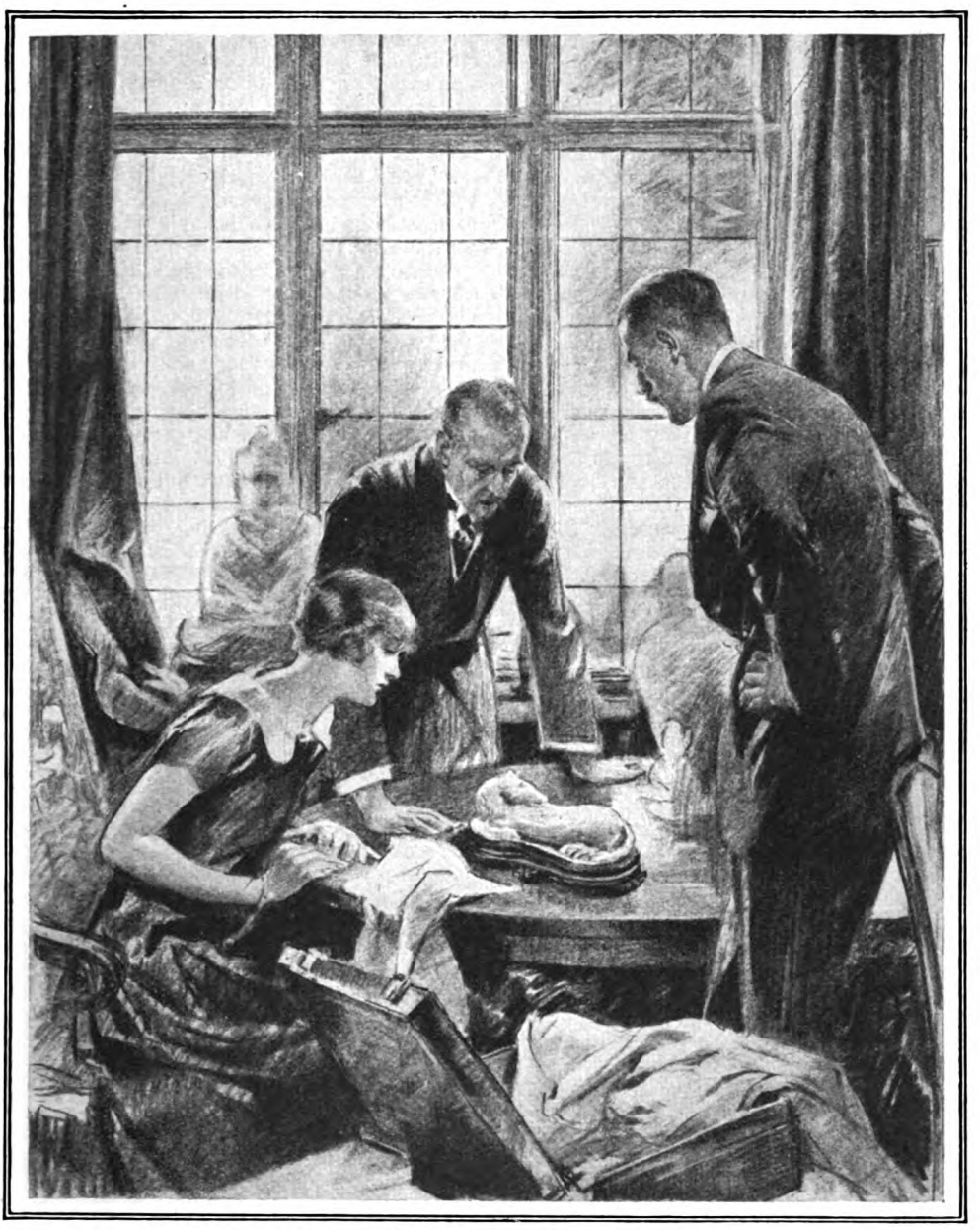
It was over a foot long and five inches high, reclining in a posture in which a horse never yet reclined, with its legs tucked under it and its head turned and resting on its back, admirably carved to the last hair in its mane and tail, out of a wonderful piece of the translucent, flaky stone.

Sir Charles made three quick steps to the table and stared down at the horse and gasped ; Miss Timmins's eyes opened wide, and she bent a little to study it ; Lord Scredington looked from one to the other with an expression of triumph.

" What do you think of it ? " he said.

" It's very nice," said Miss Timmins.

" Nice ? Nice ? What a way to speak



"Look at the work in it!" cried Sir Charles. "Look at that mane and tail and those eyelashes! Wonderful! What did you give for it?"

of a magnificent piece like this!" said Sir Charles, scornfully.

"Well, that's what it is," she said, stubbornly.

Lord Scredington nodded. "I know what you mean," he said. "You mean it's a charming and delightful piece, but not what you call filling."

Miss Timmins nodded.

"Filling!" cried Sir Charles, and snorted a terrific contempt. "Look at the work in it! Look at that mane and tail and those eyelashes! Wonderful! What did you give for it?"

"Twenty-five pounds."

"Twenty-five pounds!" Sir Charles almost howled.

"Well, what was I to do?" said Lord Scredington. "The dealer said it was compo. Apparently he'd never seen chalcedony. And he was so angry when I told him that it was not compo that I had to buy at his price to soothe him."

Miss Timmins grinned at him and said: "You'll never get another bargain like it."

Sir Charles's face had suddenly become suffused with a look of geniality. "It *is* a bargain," he said. "It's a pity it's not in your line, Roger—that you only collect good *small* pieces, snuff-bottles and buckle-tongues and so forth. You could get a good many good small pieces for the price of this."

"It depends on how much I got for this," said Lord Scredington, cautiously.

Sir Charles not only disliked his nephew, he despised him as a foolish throwback to the Vikings who had founded the Goulceby family in the ninth century.

He said in generous accents: "I'll give you two hundred for it—a hundred and seventy-five pounds on your bargain."

"But two thousand wouldn't be a hundred and seventy-five on my bargain; it would be more," said Lord Scredington, frowning as if engaged in arithmetic.

"Two thousand! Who said anything about two thousand?" snapped Sir Charles.

"I did," said Lord Scredington, with an amiable smile. "One always talks in thousands about a piece like this."

"Don't be absurd!" cried Sir Charles.

"I'm never absurd," said Lord Scredington, firmly. "But I'll leave it to Miss Timmins. Isn't two thousand a wretched price for a piece like this?"

Miss Timmins hesitated; then she shook her head. After all she was in the employ of Sir Charles. She said: "You've got to find a customer."

"I've found a customer," said Lord Scredington, confidently, nodding towards his uncle.

Sir Charles's eyes had scarcely moved from the horse. At the moment his name appeared to be Greed. He said: "What *do* you want for it?"

"I want to take it to America—with Miss Timmins, as an expert saleswoman, to sell it for me. We shall have a ripping time and clear about four thousand," said Lord Scredington with enthusiasm.

"Don't be an idiot!" snapped Sir Charles.

"Always this care for my intellectual welfare," said his nephew, gratefully.

"I'll give you a thousand for it," said Sir Charles, and groaned.

Lord Scredington scoffed at the offer. He went on to scoff at other offers till he brought his almost weeping uncle up to two thousand.

Then he said: "Two thousand, cash, was what I had made up my mind to take for it." A faint, wan brightness shone for a moment on Sir Charles's perspiring face; but it passed as his nephew added: "But not now and not from you, uncle. This horse is going to bring us closer together; it's going to be a kind of bond of union. You'll always be coming round to my flat to feast your eyes on it. We shall become comrades."

"Don't be a damned ass," snapped Sir Charles in exasperated accents. "I'll give you a cheque now."

"No—no. This horse has got to do this uplift job. I will never part with it till it has," said Lord Scredington, firmly.

Sir Charles looked at him earnestly and perceived that he was not going to get the horse; damned his young kinsman under his breath; flung pettishly out of the room; slammed the door behind him.

THE room was still trembling to the shock when Lord Scredington, as was his wicked way, grabbed at Miss Timmins. He grabbed the empty air; Miss Timmins was standing about four feet from the chair in which she had been sitting.

"If you don't stay where you are, I'll scream," she said, in a tone which left no doubt of her sincerity.

"Elusive Beulah," he murmured mournfully.

There was a pause. They looked at one another as antagonists. Then she said:—

"Why don't you let Sir Charles have the horse?"

"Because he wants it," said Lord Scredington promptly and simply.

"You shouldn't be obstinate like that," she said severely. "It isn't as if the horse was really IT. Then of course you couldn't—perhaps." She paused. "But it isn't really filling—not like—not like"—she grinned at him—"that lapis-lazuli buckle-tongue you bought from Mrs. Mackarthur."

It was a challenge; he had thought to trick her in the matter of that buckle-tongue; she had worsted him. He leapt; Miss Timmins dodged—unsuccessfully. Then she did scream—rather late.

Lord Scredington loosed her and leapt back. She wiped her lips with her handkerchief with every appearance of one suffering from nausea. As she did so she looked at him. It was odd, but every time he behaved in that outrageous and disrespectful manner she found him better-looking than ever. His eyes were certainly nearly as blue as hers, and they were of an astonishing brightness.

"No gentleman would behave like that," she said, with biting scorn.

"Don't you risk it," he said, and smiled.

"You'd much better let Sir Charles have the horse," she said.

"I had. But he sha'n't," he said.

He put it back in the attaché-case and went, leaving her with brighter eyes and much more colour in her cheeks than when he came. She pondered his dreadful manners, frowning, for some time. But now and again she smiled.

THEN the butler ushered in her father. Mr. Timmins's dim blue eyes looked upon the world through old-fashioned horn spectacles; his lank grey hair hung half-way down his Gladstonian collar; his black tie was narrow; his frock-coat was dingy; his boots were roomy.

Miss Timmins rose and went to him hastily, saying: "Good morning, daddy"; kissed him; untied and began to tie straight his tie; asked anxiously: "Have you brought Sir Charles his money?"

Sadly he said that he had not, that it was fourteen pounds short, that he had not been able to get from Huggins the thirty pounds owing for a Worcester tea service. She was distressed, declaring that Sir Charles, who always craved for the punctual payment of his money, would be furious, that her father had better get out of the house before he saw him. Mr. Timmins protested loudly and firmly that he was the proper person to bear the brunt of Sir Charles's anger, not she. She would not hear of it; she bustled him down the stairs and out of the house, telling him to go to Red Huggins and tell him that if he didn't send the thirty pounds to her in the course of the day she would come round herself and talk to him about the dud vase he had sold to Sir Charles.

She had just got back to her work when Sir Charles, still flushed, flung into the room again. To have acquired a fake and failed to acquire the chalcedony horse in the same hour had let loose the worst in him; and there was plenty to let loose.

"So that young ruffian has gone, has he?" he growled. "Has your father brought the quarter's instalment and interest? It's four days overdue already."

"He's brought twenty-five pounds of it. He couldn't get some money that Huggins owes him," said Miss Timmins, holding out to him the envelope with the notes in it.

Sir Charles grabbed it and cried furiously, "Only twenty-five pounds! I won't stand it! It's outrageous! I told your father that I wouldn't wait for it a minute after half-past nine this morning; and I won't! I'll instruct my lawyers to take proceedings at once to recover the balance of the money I lent him."

"But you've got all of it but fourteen pounds," pleaded Miss Timmins.

"I lent your father three hundred pounds in cash—*hard* cash! And he undertook to pay me back sixty-five pounds a quarter—twenty-six pounds to be deducted from the two pounds ten a week I pay you, and the rest in cash. Where is that cash? I want it! I want it now!" Sir Charles almost howled.

"It isn't dad's fault," said Miss Timmins.

"It *is* his fault!" Sir Charles blustered. "The mere fact that he lets that infernal rogue, Huggins, owe him money proves that my only sensible course is to recover *my* money at once before his business goes to rack and ruin; and I'm going to do it."

Miss Timmins protested no more; she went on with her work, glancing at Sir Charles with the eyes of hate. She had a feeling that his indignation was considerably forced, and wondered what he was really after. He went to a cabinet full of *famille rose* porcelain and gazed with a loving eye at a teapot foolishly decorated with foxes. The hate in the eyes of Miss Timmins became tinged with scorn. She had the lover of beauty's contempt for the pretty stuff.

Sir Charles turned suddenly and snapped: "Why don't you make that young ruffian sell me that horse?"

"*Me?*" exclaimed Miss Timmins, taken aback.

"Yes, you," said Sir Charles. "It's plain enough that he's taken a fancy to you, and you could easily persuade him to sell it to me."

"Why should I?" said Miss Timmins, coldly, hating him more than ever.

"Don't I pay you to help me add to my collection?" he asked, indignantly.

She did not answer. He waited, then he asked: "What's the good of your being a pretty girl, if you don't make use of your advantages?"

Miss Timmins did not tell him.

He waited a little to let the suggestion sink in, then said, "If you persuade that young ruffian to sell me that horse, I won't say anything more about the quarter's instalment being late."

"I don't care how much more you say about the quarter's instalment being late," said Miss Timmins, icily scornful. She knew by long experience the immense greed of the collector, and perceived that as long as she could be of use to him in getting the horse Sir Charles would never sell them up.

He ground his teeth; then he groaned; then he said—the words seemed to be dragged out of him: "Well, I tell you what: if you get that horse off that young ruffian

for me, for two thousand pounds, I'll make you a present of the balance of your father's debt to me."

So that was what he had been working up to. She gazed at him with thoughtful, contemptuous eyes.

"I'll think about it," she said.

"That's right! That's right!" he said, with enthusiasm. "I thought you'd see your way—I was sure of it. You're much too sensible not to. You'll not let any foolish scruples stand in your way; you'll get the horse at any cost."

MISS TIMMINS did not thank him for his good opinion of her; she frowned at his back as he went through the doorway. As a matter of fact she did not see her way at all. She was certainly not going to ask a favour of Lord Scredington. Her feelings about him were indeed mixed and conflicting; but he was the last person in the world of whom she would ask a favour. But there was the offer—too good to be rejected, almost too good to be true. It meant freedom—freedom from this burden of debt, from the fear of being sold up, escape from this thraldom to the loathsome Sir Charles back to the battle of business in which her warrior spirit took delight.

How was she to get the chalcedony horse for two thousand pounds and hand it over to Sir Charles without asking a favour of Lord Scredington? She cudgelled and cudgelled her brains for the solution of the problem. Some hours later and quite of a sudden there came out of that cudgelling an uncommonly odd, even far-fetched, solution, but feasible and quite in keeping with little Miss Timmins's warrior spirit. She would take the horse from Lord Scredington's flat and leave the two thousand pounds in its place.

Then Sir Charles and Lord Scredington could fight it out. Lord Scredington would never suspect her of taking the horse; Sir Charles would know she had it, but she would tell him that, if he revealed the fact, she would declare that he had instructed her to take it. Better still—she grinned wickedly—she would hand over the horse to Sir Charles before its owner discovered his loss—he rose late; Sir Charles did not—get his receipt for the debt, and leave him to keep the horse if he could. It would serve the old pig right! Then the whole plan stood out bright and clear; she grinned yet more wickedly. She would score off Sir Charles and Lord Scredington too. When little Miss Timmins was born a girl, the world lost a fair-to-average pirate.

Extravagant as this plan appeared, it was, thanks to her knowledge of Lord Scredington's flat, feasible. Her first meeting with him had been at that flat. She had taken a jade jui plaque to sell to him, and, discovering that he had taken the cave-man as his model, had escaped down the fire-escape from his balcony to the garden. If she could descend that fire-escape, she could ascend it. The question was whether she could get into the garden: was the door of it, which opened into a narrow lane, locked at night? She thought it quite likely that the people of the flats were careless about locking it.

The longer she pondered this extravagant scheme the more it pleased her. She awoke next morning resolved to carry it through. But first there was Sir Charles: she had no intention in the world of trusting him, even as far as she could throw him; and that was not an inch. When he came in to learn her decision, she had ready for him a simple document. By it he bound himself to transfer to her his loan to her father, if she delivered to him the chalcedony horse for two thousand pounds. He was hurt by this evidence of her distrust; he said that his word was as good as his bond; but he signed it.

That night Miss Timmins ascertained that the door of the garden was not locked. The next morning she asked Sir Charles for the two thousand pounds in notes, declaring that in these matters cash often made all the difference. Sir Charles could not gainsay this; but he protested violently before he went round to his bank to fetch the notes. He was in such perturbation of spirit when he handed them over to her that he never thought to ask for a receipt for them.

Miss Timmins decided to put her plan into execution that very night, for it was conveniently moonless. Besides, there were certain tremors; she wished to get it over. She bought an electric torch, a bag in which to carry away the horse, and a pair of rubber-soled shoes, and let herself out of Sir Charles's house at two minutes past two in the morning.

Mayfair is but a small district; and it was not three hundred yards to Lord Scredington's flat. But Miss Timmins found it a long way; her excitement was mingled with a considerable perturbation.

She was almost hoping that the garden door would be locked. It was not. She slipped through it, and making a circuit round the garden, so as to keep in the shadow, came to the fire-escape, which rose to Lord Scredington's balcony. The ascent of that fire-escape was the most uncomfortable ascent she had ever made. It seemed to her that she was at least five minutes reaching the balcony, whereas she was less than a minute and a half. As she had

expected, she found the long windows of his sitting room open. The way was clear.

But she found that her heart was beating very quickly, and that she was trembling. She flattened herself against the wall and took deep breaths to quiet herself. It was nearly three minutes before she had herself sufficiently under control to act. Then she stepped through the window.

She switched on her torch and ran the ray round the room. In the middle of the mantelpiece stood the chalcedony horse. She saw also that the door of Lord Scredington's bedroom was a few inches open. That was indeed disquieting; it gave her pause. However, there was no help for it. She let the ray rest on the horse for a good five seconds, taking in its exact position. Then she switched the light off and crossed the room quietly to the mantelpiece.

She opened the bag noiselessly and set it on the hearthrug. Then she lifted the horse from its carved wooden stand. It was a weight. She would not bother to take the wooden stand. It occurred to her that it could, later, be a matter of negotiation between Sir Charles and Lord Scredington. A shadow of a smile wreathed her lips at the thought. She put the horse in the bag and shut it noiselessly. Then she took the envelope containing the bank-notes from her pocket and set it in the middle of the wooden stand. She breathed a sigh of relief. Half—the most difficult half—of her task was accomplished.

THEN in the next room the bed creaked; and her heart stood still. A wave of terror surged through her that left her unable to stir. Bare feet padded across the bedroom; there was a click; the sitting-room blazed into a brightness dazzling after the dark; Lord Scredington, in blue silk pyjamas, stood on the threshold of the bedroom door.

His eyes rested on Miss Timmins in a blank astonishment. Then they moved to the empty stand of the chalcedony horse, then to the bag; and a frown that became a veritable scowl furrowed his brow.

"Don't try to bolt. I shall easily catch you," he said, in a harsh and infinitely disagreeable voice.

She stood still; indeed, she could not move yet. He went to the mantelpiece, took the envelope from the stand, opened it, took out the notes, counted them. Miss Timmins ran a dry tongue along her dry lips.

"So," he said; and his voice was even harsher. "You'd help that old beast, Sir Charles, to get the better of me, would you?"

She wanted to protest that she had been driven to it. Indeed, her lips moved; but no sound came from them—she was still in the paralysis of terror. She looked at his face. It was a little white; there was a hard fierceness on it; his eyes were blazing. So that was what a Viking looked like. Unpleasant, dangerous as he looked, she had never liked him so much.

"Dammit! I thought we were friends," he said, and crushed the notes together with an air of disgust, dropped them on the wooden stand, and stared at her with disappointed eyes.

The reproach affected Miss Timmins oddly and deeply. She must set herself right with him; she had to. She found her voice, an uncommonly husky and miserable voice.

"I—I wasn't helping Sir Charles to get the best of you. I had to get the horse. Sir Charles said he would sell us up if I didn't get it. And he would too," she protested. "He lent us some money—a lot of money—to get us out of a mess. Daddy had helped a friend and the friend let him down. We should have been sold up then, but Sir Charles lent us the money. And—and if he doesn't get the horse he'll sell us up himself."

Her breath gave out.

Lord Scredington looked a little less like a Viking, but not much. He said: "Incredible old hog!" Then he added: "But it's just like him. Now, let's get this quite clear. Tell me the whole thing."

She told him the whole story jerkily—all about the loan, the terms of repayment, Sir Charles's offer, his giving her the notes.

"Did you give him a receipt for them?" he said, quickly.

"No," she said.

He scowled at her thoughtfully; then he took two steps towards her, slowly, and said: "I've a good mind to give you a sound spanking for letting him lend you the money and not me."

Miss Timmins fairly wilted; she knew him to be capable of it; he looked as if he would; she believed that he was going to.

However, he only took the bag from her, took the horse out of it, thrust the crumpled notes into the pocket of his pyjama jacket, set the horse back on its stand.

Then he smiled the smile she found so charming, and said: "A most unpleasant incident. But since I have the horse and the two thousand pounds too, we will consider it closed."

Miss Timmins's mouth opened in a faint gasp and, staring at him with incredulous eyes, she said, faintly: "B-b-but what am I t-t-to say t-t-to Sir Charles?"

"Tell him just that."

"Just what?"

"That I've got the horse and the two thousand pounds too."

"But what will he say?" she almost wailed.

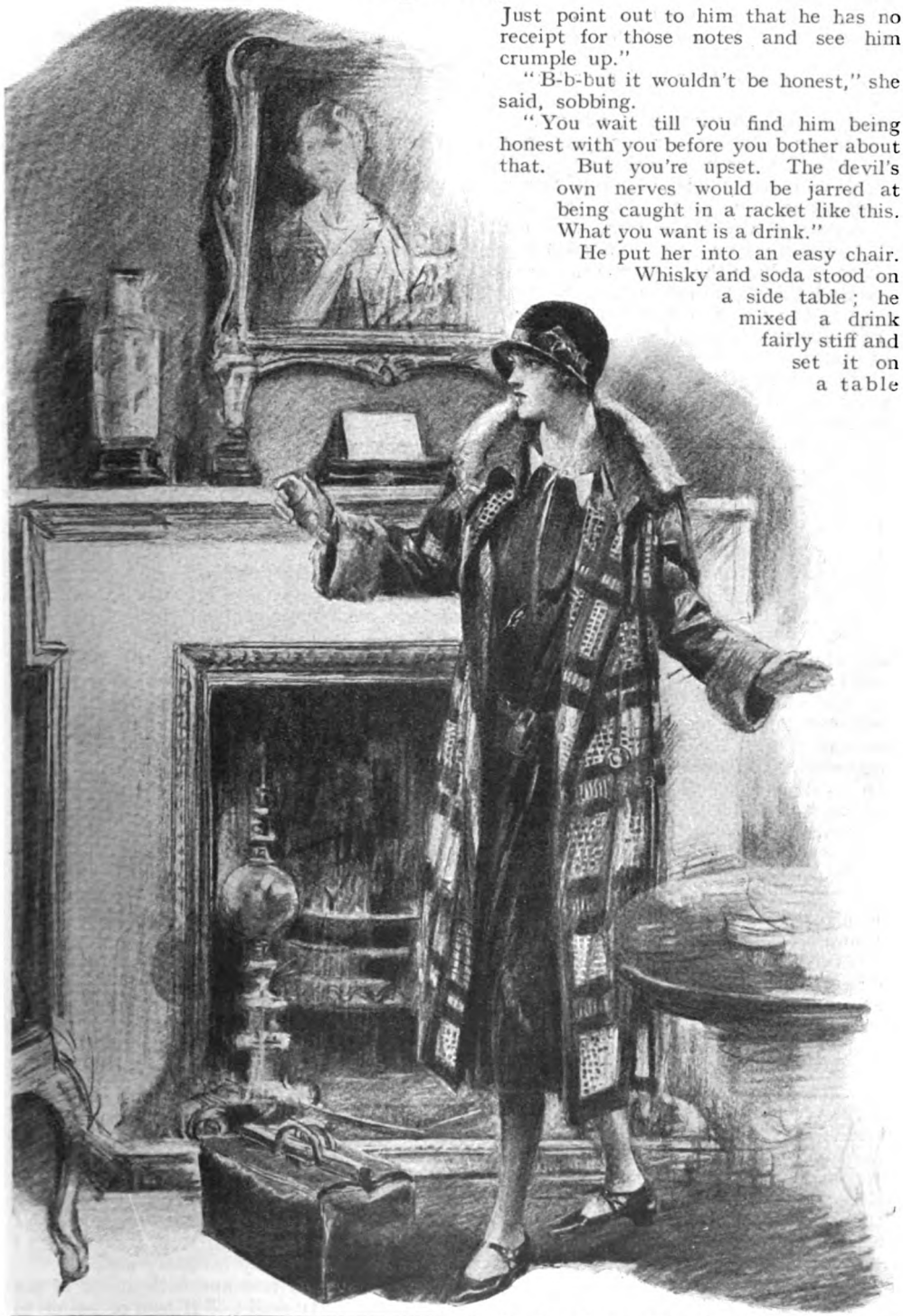
"Everything," he said, with profound conviction.

Miss Timmins gasped again; she could almost hear Sir Charles saying everything. Then her jarred nerves gave way; and to her horror she began to cry. She always thought it so silly to cry.

"Here, steady on!" said Lord Screding-

Lord Scredington, in blue silk pyjamas, stood try to bolt. I shall easily catch

ton in some dismay. "There's nothing to cry about. Don't you see that you've got that good old man in a cleft stick? No one saw him give you that two thousand pounds.



on the threshold of the bedroom door. "Don't you," he said, in a harsh voice.

Just point out to him that he has no receipt for those notes and see him crumple up."

"B-b-but it wouldn't be honest," she said, sobbing.

"You wait till you find him being honest with you before you bother about that. But you're upset. The devil's own nerves would be jarred at being caught in a racket like this. What you want is a drink."

He put her into an easy chair. Whisky and soda stood on a side table; he mixed a drink fairly stiff and set it on a table beside her chair. Then he lifted her out of the chair and sat down in it with her on his knee. She put up a formal struggle, but he

held her easily with his left hand and fed the drink to her with his right, saying in a soothing tone :—

"There—there—keep quiet and rest a little."

She ceased to struggle and relaxed.

He began to talk to her in a quiet, casual voice about matters of common interest, herself and her affairs, himself and his affairs. She grew soothed and quiet and content to be where she was. She could not remember ever having in all her life been so exactly in the right place. It might have been the effect of the whisky and soda, to which she was unused—it might not.

It was nearly half an hour later, when he had said a score of charming things to her and in the most natural and unaffected fashion kissed her not wholly irresponsive lips three times, that her sense of the proprieties awoke with a jerk. Really, you could not sit on a young man's knee in his flat at three o'clock in the morning. It was not *done!*

She struggled with evident sincerity.

He tightened his clasp and kissed her again, then loosed her, saying in reluctant accents : "Well, I suppose I must let you go. The daylight is coming ; and you ought to be home before it comes. I'd take you home ; but it's much too early in the morning for a lady to be seen in my society. I'm *always* misunderstood."

She rose and looked down at him with a bemused air. "Yes, I must be going," she said, softly, in accents little less reluctant than his own.

He went down to the street door with her.

"Don't let that old beast of an uncle of mine worry you," he said. "Just tell him distinctly where he stands, and he'll come along to me—whining loud and shrill."

He caught her to him, hugged her, kissed her, and let her go.

"Good-bye. Hurry home and get all the sleep you can."

She walked back, still bemused.

FOOLISHLY she rose as usual at seven-thirty, and, being short of sleep, rather pale, and uncommonly irritable, was in the very mood to deal faithfully with her employer when he came bustling in at nine-thirty.

He affected to gloat over his *famille rose* porcelain for a little while ; then he said, with an eagerness he failed to disguise : "Is there any news about that horse ? Have you started getting round that young ruffian yet ? "

Miss Timmins looked at him with unkind eyes and said, in unkind accents : "I'm sorry, Sir Charles, I'm afraid I made a mess of it."

"You made a mess of it ? How ? How ? " snapped Sir Charles with his ready scowl.

"Well, it seemed to me that the best way to get the horse was to go round to Lord Scredington's flat and take the horse and put the two thousand pounds in its place."

Sir Charles's scowl deepened and his eyes opened. "You must have been mad ! " he said, loudly and frankly.

"No," said Miss Timmins, firmly. "The idea was all right. I went very early this morning, about two ; and I was just taking the horse—in fact, I'd actually got it into my bag—when he came in and caught me ; and now he's got the horse and the two thousand pounds too."

Sir Charles's eyes opened to their widest and appeared to be dancing clumsily in their sockets. He cried shrilly : "You actually went to that young ruffian's flat to steal the horse ? "

"I wasn't *stealing* it ! " cried Miss Timmins, in deeply-offended accents. "I put the two thousand pounds in its place ! You told me to get it at any cost ; and that seemed the best way."

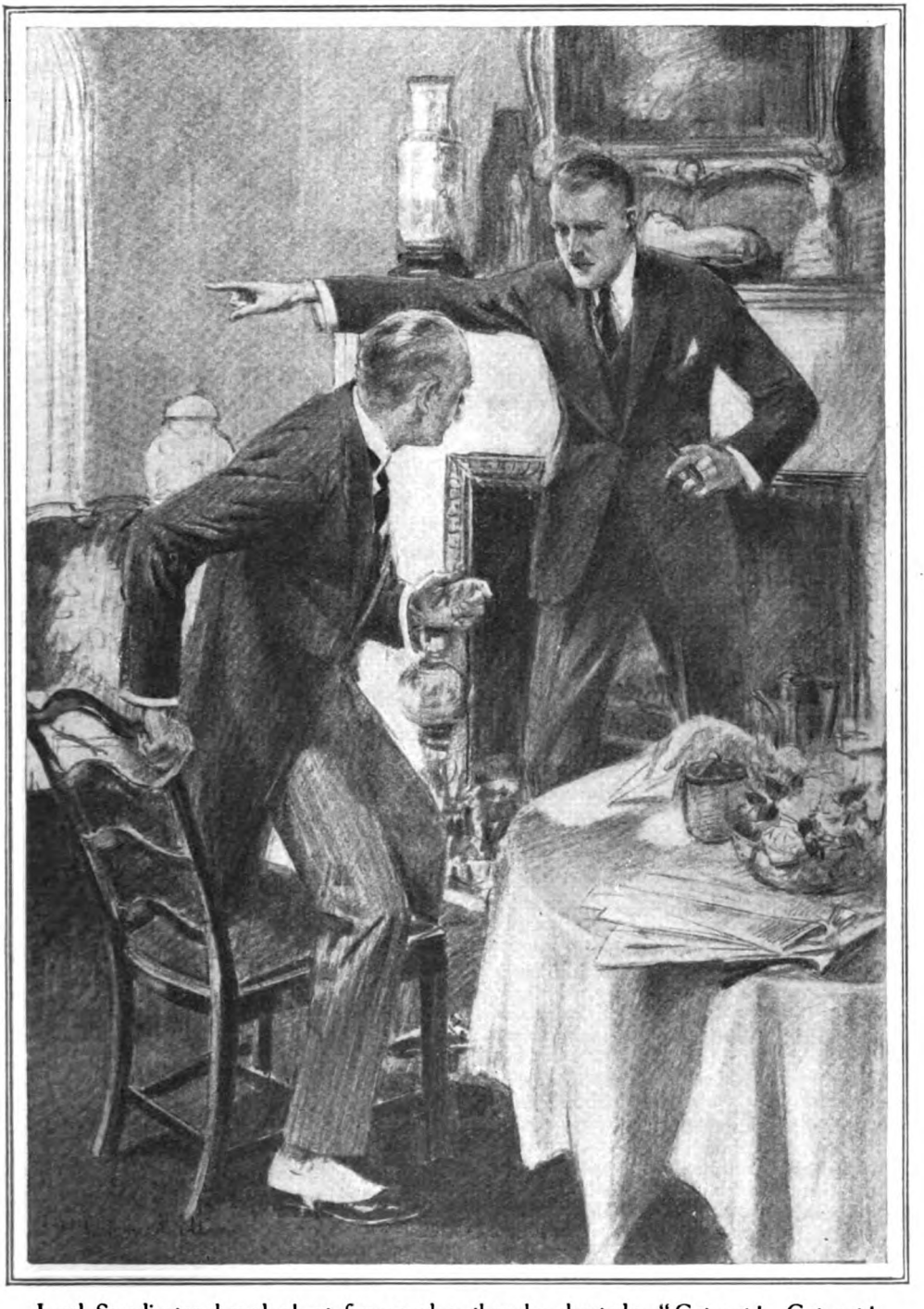
Sir Charles had not fully grasped the dreadful event. He perceived clearly that his detestable nephew would, if he could, stick to the horse and the money too. He was one of the old Goulceby Vikings ; and there was no evidence that Miss Timmins had been to his flat—she would never admit it, naturally—no evidence that she had taken the two thousand pounds with her. It would be immensely difficult, indeed, it looked impossible, to wrest from him either the money or the horse. Dithering, he leant on the cabinet of *famille rose* for support.

Then he began to rave. Miss Timmins had robbed him—robbed him of two thousand pounds ! She should get it back or she should go to prison. She should—she certainly should !

Miss Timmins protested indignantly that she had not had a penny of his two thousand pounds ; that so far from robbing him she had done her best to get the horse for him.

Sir Charles raved again. It was a conspiracy ! She and that infernal young ruffian had plotted to rob him of two thousand pounds ! They thought they could bring it off, did they ? They were wrong ! Yes ! Quite wrong ! They should rue the day they tried it on till the end of their lives ! Both of them should go to prison ! Both ! They should ! They certainly should !

Miss Timmins rose and with an air of the coldest dignity said : "If you're going to tell lies, Sir Charles, I shall just say you never gave me that two thousand pounds. Nobody saw you give it me ; and you never



Lord Scredington heard about five words; then he shouted: "Get out! Get out! Never let me see your villainous face again!"

got a receipt for it. Nobody will believe you did anything so silly; they'll think you've gone mad."

Sir Charles was brought up short; he perceived that he was in a worse plight than he had thought. There was no receipt. No one would believe that a man of his known shrewdness had been such a fool as to give a young woman two thousand pounds without getting a receipt for it. He dithered again. Then the craving to be near his lost two thousand came on him violently. It was no use his wasting his time on Miss Timmins; he must get to the principal. He dashed out of the room, down the stairs, out of the house; he could not wait for his car. He jumped into a passing taxi.

He found Lord Scredington, uncommonly fresh and debonair, at breakfast, and burst into furious reproaches, abuse, and demands. The burden of his outcry was that he wanted his money back.

Displaying a callous indifference to his anguish, his nephew did not appear to hear him; he ate his eggs and bacon, with every appearance of absorbed enjoyment, in unbroken silence. Not till he had finished them did he speak.

He said: "I don't know what you're talking about, you unspeakable old hog."

Sir Charles's dreadful expectation was realized: his nephew *was* going to behave like a Viking. Silent, he gazed on him with eyes of horror. Threats and imprecations and abuse were wasted on a Viking; he must get back his money by other methods. He produced a noise that was more like the bleat of a swooning goat than a laugh and asserted that the joke had gone far enough.

"What joke, you unspeakable old hog?" asked his nephew.

Again the wrong tactics! Sir Charles, doubtful whether a Viking was permeable by reason, tried quiet reasoning. Eating buttered toast and marmalade with a beatific air, his nephew again appeared rapt away from the world in his own imaginings. Only when he had finished these viands, and Sir Charles begged him to be a sportsman and a gentleman, did he break that silence to assert that an unspeakable hog like Sir Charles knew a fat lot about gentlemen.

Then he rose languidly, lit a cigar, and studied the chalcedony horse with a loving eye, stroking its insensible back. Out of breath, Sir Charles watched him murderously.

Then his nephew suddenly turned on him and said sharply, in a grating voice that jarred Sir Charles's every nerve: "I want another five hundred and the mortgage, or whatever it is, you've got on old Timmins's shop for the horse—just to teach you not to use young girls to do your dirty work."

Sir Charles could hardly believe his ears: his nephew had practically admitted that he had the two thousand pounds! At once he felt that he was on familiar ground and began to protest against the monstrous price.

Lord Scredington heard about five words; then he shouted: "Get out! Get out! Never let me see your villainous face again! Get out this instant!"

SIR CHARLES gathered that he was to go without his money or the horse. He almost screeched that he was off to get the cheque for five hundred and Timmins's mortgage, and fled. In his panic he was back with both in less than ten minutes, to find his nephew on the point of going out. Lord Scredington took the cheque and mortgage from him, told him to take away the horse at once, or he might change his mind about letting it go, left him to wrap it up with the help of his man, and went straight to his house.

There he found Miss Timmins at work, very gloomy at the prospect of being sold up.

"Good morning, Beulah darling," he said, with cheerful kindliness. "I hope you're none the worse for your late hours."

Miss Timmins was in a chastened mood, in spite of his cheek in calling her "Beulah darling"—some inner self asked if it was such cheek after their interview that early morning; she smiled at him rather miserably and said that she was rather short of sleep.

"You must sleep after lunch, then," he said, cheerfully. "I came round to say I've sold the horse to the old hog; but I charged him more than two thousand for it, and he'd have made that an excuse for bilking you of your commission, though you certainly earned it. So I tore it off him for you."

He handed her the mortgage.

Miss Timmins stared at it with unbelieving eyes; then the tears—she was short of sleep—rose to them; she flushed and said:—

"Why—why—you dear!"

ST PAUL'S

By the Very Rev. W. R. Inge
(DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S)

At the present moment, when the public interest in St. Paul's is so widespread, the following article on the history and romance of the cathedral, the great part it has played in the life of the nation, and the important events which have occurred there, will be read with unusual interest, especially as it is written by so great an authority as Dean Inge.

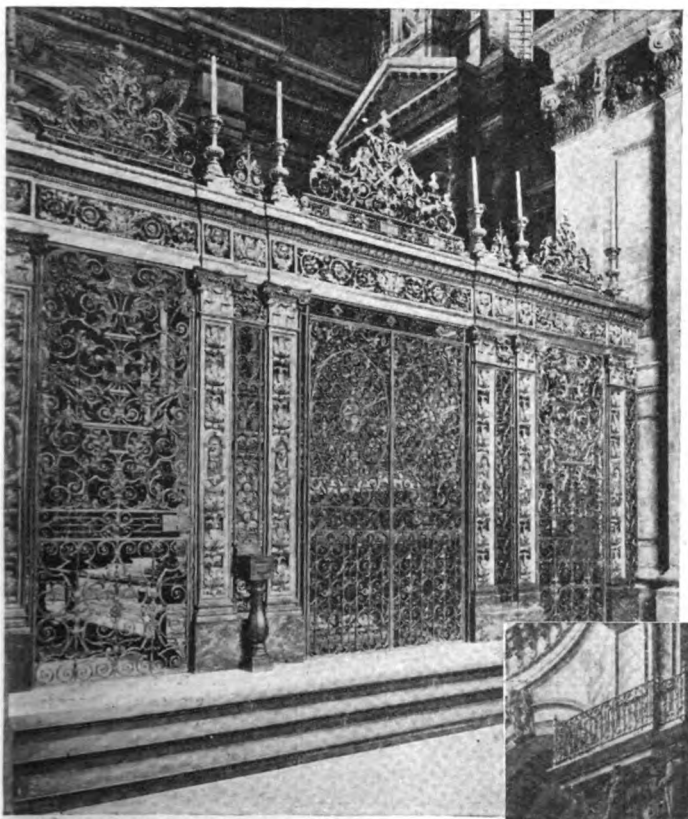
WHAT is the impression which the first sight of St. Paul's makes upon a stranger? "Unspeakably grand and noble," is the verdict of Nathaniel Hawthorne, the great American novelist. He perceived, as many others have done, that the effect of nobility and grandeur is produced partly by its situation. It stands in the very centre of the proudest and greatest capital in the world, the Metropolis not only of an island in the north-west of Europe, but of a vast empire on which the sun never sets. ("And seldom rises," a foreigner may add, after spending a fortnight in foggy London.) Round its base surges a cataract of traffic, crowding the pavements and congesting the roadways, but without seeming to disturb the majestic calm of the vast building with its soaring dome. Even the grime and soot, "the incense which all

the chimneys since the time of Wren have offered at its shrine," seem to belong to the cathedral, and to be more in keeping with London than the gleaming white surface which Wren must have witnessed when in his old age he contemplated his finished work.

On the other hand, a French critic describes St. Paul's as "grandiose, but without soul." Some fanatics of the Catholic revival have said that it bears the marks of being a Protestant church. There is, or was not long ago, some justification for this censure, if applied to the interior. Not only does it lack the mystery and poetry of an old Gothic cathedral; it was, when I first remember it fifty years ago, cold and dingy and almost repellent. But since that time, thanks mainly to two Deans, Church and Gregory, and their colleagues, it has become the visible centre of the public worship of the Empire, hallowed not only by daily prayer and praise, but by association with almost every great event, joyful or sorrowful, in the nation's history. The thanksgiving service for the recovery of the Prince of Wales, afterwards Edward VII.; the two Jubilees of Queen Victoria, of which the second, in 1897, was the most magnificent pageant in modern English history; and numerous funerals of great men in the reigns of the old Queen and her son are not yet forgotten. The service after the loss of the *Titanic* was a prelude to the greater disasters in store for British shipping. But St. Paul's is dearer than ever to the heart of the nation since the numerous services held there during the Great War. The King came repeatedly to show respect to the brave men who had given their lives for the cause of the Allies. Nothing could be more touching than the singing of the Serbian national anthem by four hundred Serbian boys, refugees in England. The Canadians, the Australasians, the Artillery, the Cavalry, each had their day of solemn commemoration. And to those who could read the signs of the times there was an almost intolerable feeling of relief from dire anxiety when on April 20th, 1917, we held "a solemn service to Almighty God on the occasion of the entry of the United States of America into the Great War for freedom." Bishop Brent of the Philippines, a noble character and a warm friend of this country, was the preacher; but no eloquence could pierce the hearts of the vast congregation so keenly as the glorious "Battle Hymn of the Republic," which was sung, more slowly and solemnly than is customary in America,

Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 was the most magnificent pageant in modern English history. The photograph shows the service on the steps of the cathedral.

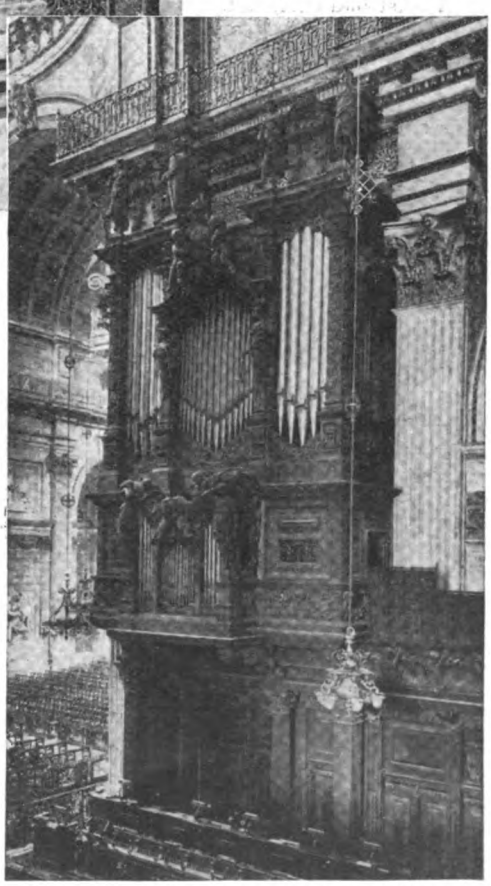
Photo. Eyre & Spottiswoode, Ltd.



The magnificent wrought-iron gates in St. Paul's are among the finest in the country.

just before the sermon. In that fierce yet deeply devout war-song the temper of Cromwell's Ironsides seemed to have revived; the words and music were a presage of victory. The years of war were marked also by the participation in our services of Eastern ecclesiastics—of a Serbian priest, afterwards bishop, who was, I suppose, the first non-Anglican to occupy the pulpit of St. Paul's; the Archbishop of Cyprus, with his quaint head-dress, long beard, and staff surmounted by a golden pomegranate; and the Archbishop of Athens, afterwards Ecumenical Patriarch, who at my request gave the benediction in Greek. Then there was the great thanksgiving service after the signing of the Peace—a day of chastened thankfulness, for the skies were still black with clouds. These memories of four long years of agony and glory and final deliverance have knit the hearts of the nation to their great cathedral. If it ever seemed to be "without soul" during the stolid prosperity of the Victorian era, it can seem so no more. The soul of St. Paul's is the soul of England, in all its deep-seated reverence for truth and justice and fair play, and its confidence, sometimes dangerously optimistic, that the God who has been our help in ages past will keep us safe in years to come. Our numerous visitors from other English-speaking lands seem to feel that its soul is also the soul of the race and the Empire.

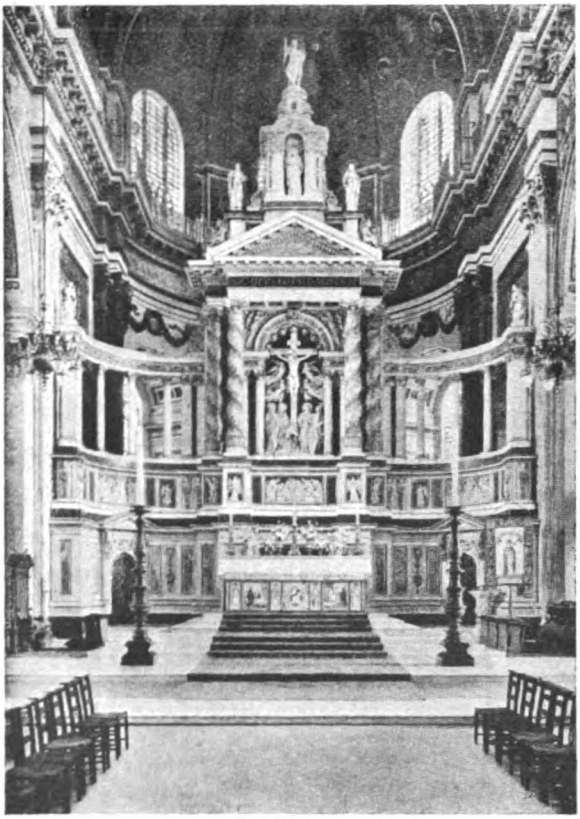
Nor is the impression of the interior any longer dingy or gloomy. The cathedral is now kept clean and warm and light; it is adorned with mosaics which are not perfect specimens of that most difficult art, but which at least give a richness of colour and diversity to the broad flat surfaces. It contains also several



The organ exhibits some of Grinling Gibbons' best work.

fine pictures, round which groups of visitors are to be found at all times of the day. Of these, Holman Hunt's "Light of the World" is evidently the popular favourite. When we add to these the magnificent ironwork gates in the choir, the beautiful wood-carving of the stalls and organ, and the dignified reredos, it cannot be said justly that the interior of St. Paul's is bare and uninspiring. The reredos, as old people will remember, was assailed as Popish when it was erected. It is not easy to understand the state of mind of those who protested against it; the modern Evangelical is no longer afraid of appeals to the eye. But artistically it is more open to criticism. Not only does it cut off the eastern part of the choir from the rest of the cathedral, but its great height seems to bring the roof lower. The effect would probably be better if all the superstructure above the pediment were removed.

The two side-chapels, called after St. Michael and St. George and St. Dunstan, erected, it is said, to please James II., who as a Papist had designs upon St. Paul's, are now utilized. The former, which used to be the meeting place of the Bishop of London's Consistory Court, and which afterwards housed for a time the Duke of Wellington's monument, and was next turned into a Baptistery, has now become the Chapel of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, and is gaily decked with the heraldic flags of the principal Knights. The Order has recently added to the decorations of the chapel, which always interests our visitors. St. Dunstan's Chapel has a carved oak screen and marble panels with mosaic above; it is in constant use for week-day services. Before long the Kitchener Chapel, at the extreme north-west corner of the cathedral, will be open to the public. It is the St. Paul's War Memorial, and will contain a fine Pieta and a recumbent effigy of Lord Kitchener. The work has been unduly delayed, but is nearing completion.



The Reredos.

The sepulchral monuments in St. Paul's are mostly ugly, cumbrous, and grotesque, though the interior does not resemble a stone-mason's yard, like parts of Westminster Abbey. It is a great misfortune that the indiscretions of good-natured Chapters in the past seem to be irreparable. If a suggestion is made to clear away the tomb of some nonentity, which has blocked up several cubic yards of space for more than a century, indignant descendants spring out of the earth. Anglo-Catholics squirm at the obtrusive effigy of the "First Protestant Bishop of India" confirming candidates who are presumably meant for Hindus; and Dr. Samuel Johnson looks (as has been said) like a retired gladiator meditating on a misspent life. The recumbent effigies of General Gordon and Lord Leighton are much better, and the present Chapter cannot be accused of consenting to any further disfigurement of the upper church. A small tablet in the crypt is all that we now sanction, except in very rare cases, and a useful resolution stands that no larger monument may be granted within two years after the death of the person whom it is desired to honour. Even in the crypt there is not very much space for the great men who we hope will serve their country in the future.

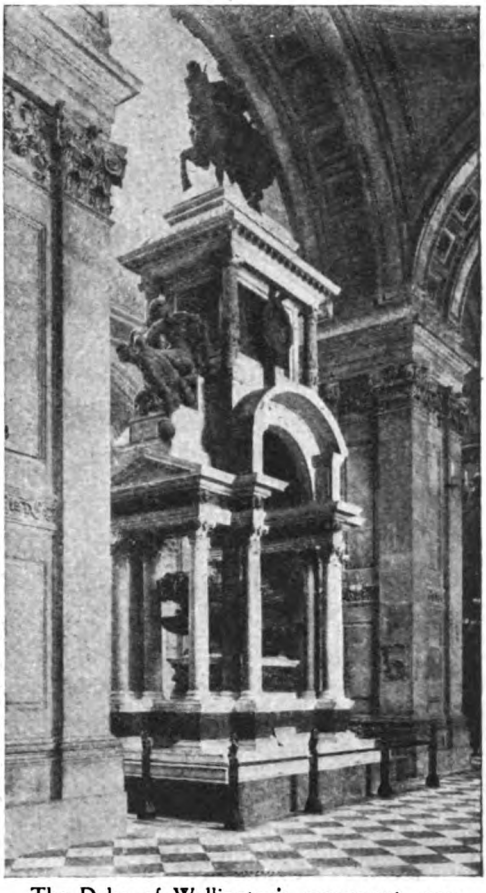
There is, however, one monument in St. Paul's which stands quite alone, the tomb of the Duke of Wellington, by Alfred Stevens. This is probably the supreme

achievement of English monumental design since the Middle Ages. It must, however, be confessed that it is quite out of place between two piers of the nave. The head of the horseman almost touches the top of the arch. It is amusing to hear that a proposal was once made to place this monument under the centre of the dome, which would have made the whole cathedral a mausoleum to the Iron Duke. The actual graves of Wellington and Nelson in the crypt illustrate the change of feeling between the two Great Wars. Our two saviours from Napoleon deserved all the honours that they received; but the taste of our ancestors now seems to us a little heathenish.

The ascent of the dome is no light task, but it is made by many people every year. The view from the summit was magnificent—during the coal strike. Perhaps the day may come when London will consume its own smoke, and when we shall no longer be obliged to wash our hands four times a day. The dome of St. Paul's will then be well worth climbing.

But though the present building is full of interest and beauty, and though the associations which have gathered round it increase in richness in every decade, we are no more willing to admit that St. Paul's began its history at the end of the seventeenth century than that the Church of England began its history at the Reformation. St. Paul's is almost as old as London.

Bede says that Ethelbert of Kent and Sebba King of the East Angles built the first Christian church here, probably on the site of a heathen temple. It was here that Mellitus, Bishop of London, refused to give "that white bread"—the consecrated elements of the Holy Communion—which the pagan princes demanded; for which refusal he was expelled. This church was burnt in the reign of William the Conqueror. The great cathedral which took its place was begun in 1087 by Maurice, Bishop of London. The work progressed slowly, and was far from complete when in 1136 another great fire devastated London from London Bridge to "the church of the Danes." This fire severely injured the cathedral, but it was not totally destroyed, and the work upon it was resumed. The steeple was finished in 1221, the choir in 1240. The Norman apse was altered into an Early English choir, with a very beautiful rose window; this was completed in 1283. The spire was of wood, covered with lead, a mode of construction more common on the Continent than in England. Its height is not accurately known, but it probably reached very nearly five hundred feet, a hundred feet higher than Salisbury, which has now the highest as well as the most beautiful spire in England. This glorious spire, which towered above the forest of steeples which then adorned the City of London, was injured by lightning in the fifteenth century, and totally destroyed by the same cause (or, as some say, by the carelessness of a plumber) in 1561. The molten lead ruined part of the roof, which Queen Elizabeth exerted herself to repair, but the spire was never rebuilt. Old St. Paul's was therefore shorn of its chief glory more than a hundred years before the Great Fire.



The Duke of Wellington's monument—probably the supreme achievement of English monumental design since the Middle Ages.

A peculiarity of this cathedral was that the choir was as long as the nave; each was three hundred feet long, with twelve bays. The effect must have been very stately. Indeed, in spite of our admiration for Wren's great work, it is impossible not to regret the loss of the old cathedral. The churchyard was much as it is now, with the famous Paul's Cross, a great place for open-air sermons, near the north-east corner. It was not a beautiful object, closely

resembling the kiosques in which newspapers are sold in Paris. There was an outside gallery attached to the cathedral, for distinguished persons who wished to hear the preaching. The whole of the space between the north transept and the west end was occupied by the Bishop of London's palace, which, with its gardens and outbuildings, extended from Ivy Lane to Ave Maria Lane and beyond Paternoster Row. Outside this house some of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators were hung, drawn, and quartered. The Deanery, a large square building of which no drawings survive, was nearly on its present site, but projected somewhat into the churchyard, cutting off the south-west corner. Just beyond the east end of the cathedral was a graceful *clochier* or clock-tower, with a spire about as high as the cathedral roof.

The rose-window, with the Seven Lights beneath it, made the view eastwards most beautiful. The monuments in Old St. Paul's were as interesting as those in the Abbey. They included the tombs of St. Erconwald (693), Ecgwulf, Bishop of London (745), Ralph de Baldock, a fourteenth-century bishop, and Robert de Braybrooke, who died in 1444. Other notable tombs were those of Sir Christopher Hatton, John of Gaunt, Sir Nicholas Bacon, William Herbert Earl of Pembroke, Sir Anthony Van Dyck, Sir Francis Walsingham, and Bishop Roger Niger (1241), who began the "new work" on the choir.

Those who have studied the services of the mediæval Church can reproduce for themselves the stately processions and solemn liturgies of the pre-Reformation worship here. In the Middle Ages churchmen were not averse to occasional buffoonery in sacred buildings. Many details, says Mr. C. A. Miles, have been preserved of the Boy-Bishop customs at St. Paul's Cathedral in the thirteenth century. It had apparently been usual for the Boy Bishop, who was one of the choristers, to make the cathedral dignitaries act as taper and incense bearers, thus reversing matters so that the great performed the functions of the lowly. In 1263 the dignitaries struck, and clerks of lower rank were chosen for these offices. But on the evening before Holy Innocents' Day the Boy Bishop demanded a supper for himself and his train from one of the Chapter. If he went to the Deanery, he might take with him a train of fifteen. On the following day he was given a dinner, after which he rode in state through the City, blessing the people. He also preached in the cathedral, and did not forget to pray for the "right reverend father and worshipful lord my brother Bishop of London, your diocesan," and for "my worshipful brother the Dean of this cathedral church," while another "Bishop," in speaking of the choristers and children of the song-school, added, "It is not so long since I was one of them myself."

A tragic chapter in the history of Old St. Paul's is the story of the desecration to which the building was subjected during the latter half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century. From the time of the Reformation, all reverence for the sacred edifice was lost, though proclamations against brawling in the church were issued from time to time "Paul's" became a favourite meeting-place of fops and gallants, of lawyers and men of business. John Evelyn even says that it had become "a stable of horses and a den of thieves," but this refers to the time after the Great Rebellion. The middle aisle was called "Paul's Walk." Bishop Earle, in his "Microcosmography" (1628), calls it "a heap of stones and men, with a vast confusion of languages. The noise in it is like that of bees—a kind of still roar or loud whisper. It is the great exchange of all discourse, and no business whatsoever but is here stirring and afoot. . . . All inventions are emptied here, and not a few pockets." We all remember Falstaff saying that he bought Bardolf in Paul's. The fashionable hours were between eleven and twelve, and again after dinner between three and six. The crowd did not cease to perambulate the nave during Divine service. Mr. Longman, in his book on the Three Cathedrals, has collected much more evidence of this scandalous desecration, but for our present purpose this will suffice.

In Queen Elizabeth's reign a man named Bankes was the owner of a performing horse called Marocco, of which wonderful stories are told, among others that the horse climbed to the top of St. Paul's—"to the top of the steeple," one account says; but we must remember (though Mr. Longman seems to have forgotten it) that the spire was no longer standing. The horse may have walked up the staircase to the top of the tower, and there have shown itself to "a number of asses who stood braying below." The end of Bankes and Marocco was tragic; for they went to Rome, where the Pope burnt them both alive as sorcerers.

It is worth while to consult "Old London Illustrated," in which the famous drawings of H. W. Brewer are re-edited with notes by Mr. Herbert Cox. The drawings of the cathedral are exceedingly fine; but even more striking are those of the streets by which it was approached. Before the reign of Henry VIII., so disastrous to architecture, the City of London must have been incomparably beautiful, one mass of splendid

monastic establishments with their great churches, other fine churches in every street, timbered mansions, and the picturesque old City gates. Even Oxford must have been far less beautiful. And over all towered the mighty spire, the visible centre of the whole City. We have had to pay a heavy price for all the wealth and prosperity which modern industrialism has brought.

It was not an intact Gothic cathedral that perished in the Great Fire. The fabric had been grossly neglected, and the traditions of Gothic architecture were so entirely forgotten that restoration was worse than neglect. Inigo Jones added an Italian portico, which had a ludicrous appearance, but was greatly admired at the time. The Civil War prevented further architectural outrages, after a sum, enormous for the time — nearly a hundred thousand pounds—had been subscribed for restoring the cathedral. The unexpended portion of this was confiscated by the Parliament. The Roundheads used the church as a cavalry barrack. After the Restoration the work was at once resumed, and Wren made his proposals for the improvement of the building. It is, indeed, fortunate for his reputation that the Great Fire stopped his proposed vandalisms. He wished to place a large dome in the middle of the Gothic church, thereby making it "a very proper place for a vast auditory." A brick roof, plastered with stucco, was to look down on the scene. The portico of Inigo Jones is pronounced to be "an entire and excellent piece."

THE DESECRATION OF ST. PAUL'S.

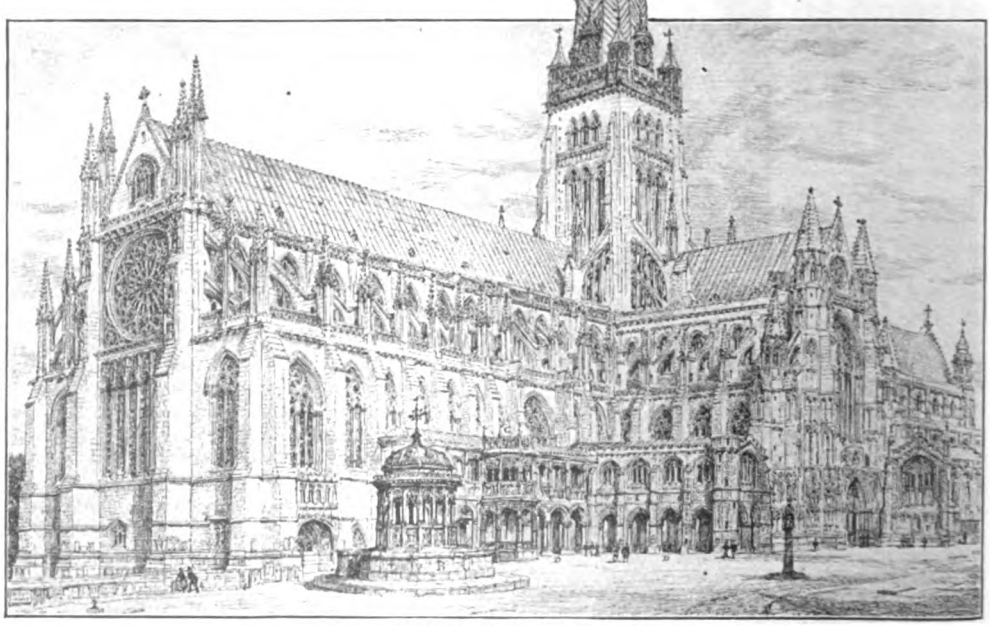
During the latter half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century all reverence for the sacred edifice was lost. It became a favourite meeting-place with all classes, and the crowd did not cease to perambulate even during Divine service.

Whether an architect with more respect for Gothic could have repaired the old cathedral after the fire cannot be decided

with certainty; large portions of it were standing, and were only levelled, after great difficulties, by gunpowder and battering-rams. Wren at first thought that restoration was possible, and time and money were lost in patching. But it is probable that the building was ruined beyond restoration, and certain that if Wren had tried to restore it he would have produced a hybrid of styles which would have pleased no critic of taste. It was better that he should have a free hand to design a new cathedral, and it would have been better still if he had not been interfered with in making his plans.

The rejection of his first plan is said to have cost him bitter tears. The plan can be studied in the large model which is on view in the west gallery, and visitors must form their own opinion about it. The interior, with its great open space, would have been grand and impressive; but the exterior seems to me very inferior to the existing cathedral. A mystery attaches to another design, approved and signed by Charles II. It is like a caricature of Wren's style, and one almost suspects that the great architect, exasperated by the stupidity of the authorities, produced this grotesque plan as a joke. He was permitted to make some changes, and fortunately he decided to "reform it altogether."

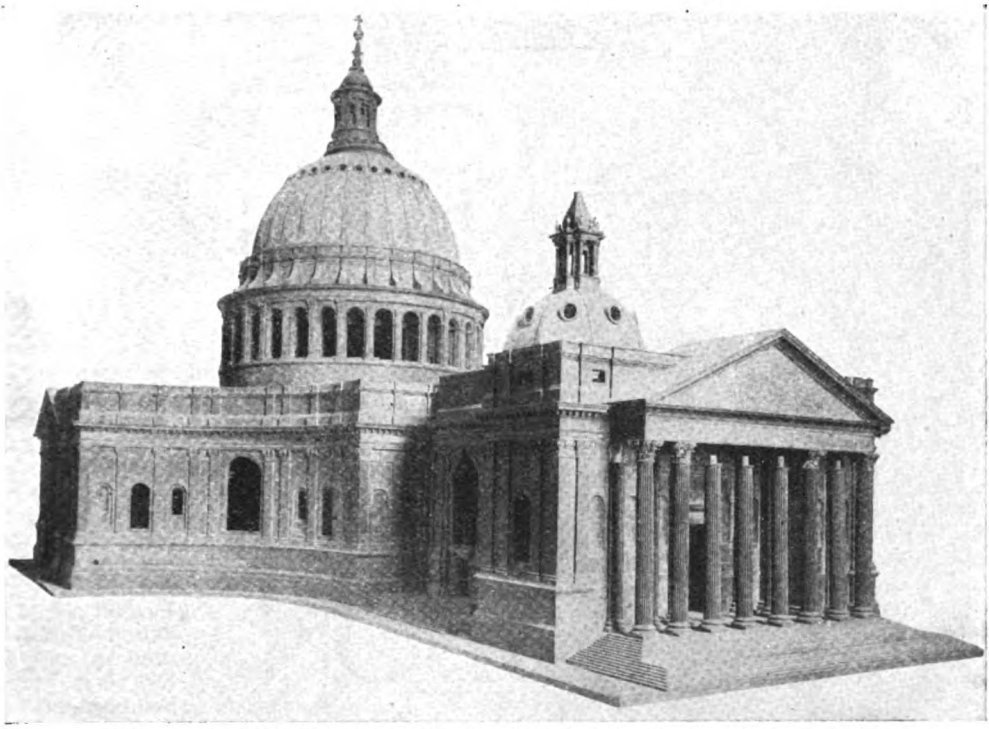
At the present time, Dean Sancroft's letter to Sir Christopher Wren about the cost of the building and the chances of raising the money will be read with interest. "And then for the procuring contributions to defray this, we are so sanguine as not to doubt of it, if we could but once resolve what we would do and what that would cost. So that the only part of your letter we demur to is the method you propound of declaring, first, what money we would bestow, and then designing something just of that expense; for quite otherwise, the way their lordships resolve upon is to frame a design handsome and noble, and suitable to all the ends of it, and to the reputation of the City and the nation, and to take it for granted that money will be had to accomplish it." I cannot compliment my predecessor on the lucidity of his style, but the purport is clear, that he thought the public might be trusted to give whatever was needed for St. Paul's. Eventually the greater part of the money—about three-quarters of a million—was procured by a tax on coal, which is at least



OLD ST. PAUL'S.

The spire, which was its chief glory, was destroyed in 1561. The famous Paul's Cross, a great place for open-air sermons, is in the foreground, while behind it may be seen the gallery from which distinguished persons might hear the preaching.

By permission of "The Builder."



This model of Sir Christopher Wren's rejected design for St. Paul's Cathedral is on view in the West Gallery.

a more respectable method of raising the wind than the sale of indulgences, to which the authorities resorted for the building of Old St. Paul's. We have been able to throw ourselves on the voluntary liberality of the public, and we have not been disappointed.

The congregations in St. Paul's have not varied much since I became Dean in 1911. They increased slightly at the beginning of the Great War, and then fell off, the probable reason being that most people were busy with war work. On weekday mornings we usually have between one hundred and two hundred; on weekday afternoons between three hundred and eight hundred. On special occasions, such as the great musical services which we hold three times a year, the nave is usually full, but it is seldom that all who come cannot find chairs. The building is therefore just large enough for the wants of London. Last year the Wembley sightseers came in enormous numbers to see St. Paul's; it was full of visitors all day long.

It is inevitable that such a vast building should need frequent repair, and that its custodians should sometimes feel anxious about its stability. Nor can we be surprised that our experts do not invariably agree together. We have not the advantage of a solid rock foundation, like the new cathedral at New York; and the effects of deep cellars, underground tunnels, and the vibration of heavy traffic were naturally not considered by Sir Christopher Wren. Careful experiments and measurements have been in progress for years, and at last we have been presented with a "final" and unanimous Report, which is distinctly reassuring. The work now to be undertaken will, in the opinion of the best architects and engineers in England, make St. Paul's as secure as when it was first built. We are deeply touched by the noble response of the public to the appeal which a generous and disinterested offer from *The Times* newspaper enabled us to disseminate over the whole Empire without expense and trouble to ourselves.

The evidence of affection for St. Paul's is not to be mistaken. Speaking as the titular head of the Chapter, I can say that it is the fruit of loyal and devoted co-operation by all who are in charge of different departments, the clergy, the musicians, the clerk of the works and his subordinates, the virgers, guides, and wandsmen. I have never known a great machine run so smoothly.

HIGH STAKES

by

PERCEVAL GIBBON

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

SAVE for its occupants, the space to the back and each side of the stage, with its gaunt iron staircase leading up to an iron gallery, its bare brickwork, and its various gear, was like a dismantled factory. Spanish peasants and gipsies of both sexes, a gorgeous officer or two, some ladies of high degree in the inevitable mantilla, moved about or stood talking in groups, waiting to be mustered upon the stage for the opening chorus of "The Cigarette Girl." And somewhat apart from them, in talk with Mayo, his stage manager, stood Ben Torrance, "sole proprietor"—or so it was advertised—of the Alcazar Theatre.

There was a sense in which he was more wonderful and more grotesque than any of his prinked and painted mimes. He was a tall man, full six feet in height, bulky over all, but greatest in the girth; and in his vast and swollen face, with its curled white moustache, there abode yet a reflection of an aquiline and instant quality. His name had originally been Mendel Schatz; the implication of it broke out in a diamond on the little finger of each hand, diamond studs standing forth like oases in the spacious desert of his shirt-front, diamond links to his cuffs; so that, when the light served, he appeared spangled like a harlequin.

"There's the orchestra tuning up already," he was saying. "We'll be late with the curtain. What the blazes is keeping her?"

Mayo, in shirt-sleeves, lean and lantern-jawed, shook his head.

"If she was to get here this minute, we'd be late just the same, chief," he said. "She couldn't change an' make up in the time."

"You 'phoned?" demanded Torrance.

"I told you I did," retorted Mayo. "An' I told you, too, that her maid answered the 'phone and said Miss May was 'not at home.' An' that's all I could get."

Ben Torrance drew strongly on his cigar. The orchestra, having finished tuning, broke into the overture.

"Who's her understudy?" he said.

Near them there hovered a slender girl, covered from neck to ankles in a long dark cloak. She had been hovering some time, but neither had noticed her. Now Mayo turned and saw her.

"Ah!" he said. "Here she is. Come here, Miss Vincent."

The girl came into the august presence. Torrance gazed down upon her with a scrutiny so impersonal as to be inhuman.

"Seems, Miss Vincent, that Miss Mayo is late, so——"

The girl cut him short—cut the great and unique Ben Torrance short.

"She isn't coming at all," she answered, calmly.

"Eh?" squawked Mayo.

"What? How can you know that?" demanded Torrance.

For answer Miss Vincent produced from her bosom a note and held it forth.

"This was waiting for me at the stage-door," she replied.

"Read it, Mayo!" commanded Torrance.

Mayo was already reading.

"*My Dear Kitty,*" the letter ran. "*When you get to the theatre to-night, get ready at once to go on in my part. I am not coming; in fact, I am not coming at all.*

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any more. I can't explain now. Show this to Ben and Mayo when it's too late for them to make any change; and there's the chance you've been yearning for! Give them all you've got, my dear, and you can't fail. Much love from

"ELSIE MAY."

Mayo looked up. "Not coming at all any more!" he repeated, dazedly.

"Not coming any more!" echoed Torrance. "We'll see about that. But she isn't here to-night, anyway, and we've got to get that curtain up. Here, Mayo! Put your coat on and go out and make the announcement—'sudden indisposition,' and all that. Hurry, now!"

"Do I announce Miss Kitty Vincent as her substitute?" demanded Mayo, as he reached for his coat.

Before Torrance could answer—he had paused for a final instant of consideration—the girl made a movement. The cloak that draped and hid her fell from her and lay in a heap about her feet — and the chrysalis was forthwith a butterfly. The

"I think you'll do," he said. "This is your chance! Make the most of it."

costume of the Cigarette Girl—scarlet and saffron and white—was close about a frame whose every delicate line testified to the lissomness and grace of youth. She stuck one hand on her hip, lifted her chin, and smiled slowly, with eyelids drooping. Torrance stared at her, and Torrance was a judge.

"Yes," he answered Mayo; "you do!"

Mayo departed upon his mission, and Torrance turned to the girl.

"I think you'll do," he said. "Elsie was right about one thing; this is your chance! Make the most of it."

He turned his great back upon her and moved away. He knew better than to offer advice to one who might be a genius or waste it on one who might be a fool. He had not been once Mendel Schatz, the son of a marriage-broker in Warsaw, for nothing.

It was at the back of the dress circle that he stationed himself to witness her entrance to the presence of the crowded house, chill with disappointment at being deprived of its Elsie May. She had a few lines to speak that melted cleverly, and without a breach, into a song. She could sing, too. And presently it was apparent that she could dance like a wind-blown flame. But it was nothing like this that made old Ben Torrance nod his wise head. There was fire in the girl; there was the authentic force; and already she was charming her audience from its sulks.

"Elsie May'll come back tearing her hair when she hears of this," he said to himself, smiling. Oh, he knew what stage-folk are, did old Ben Torrance.

But he was wrong! Elsie May never came back. A firm of lawyers settled her affairs and paid forfeit on her broken contract; her place knew her no more; and Kitty Vincent reigned in her stead. A star in eclipse, a firefly that had been extinguished, a nightingale that was stricken dumb—that was Elsie May!

AND then, by one of those chances which London furnishes so lavishly, Torrance saw her. It was in the chill and sour murk of a drizzly February Sunday evening, at the mouth of a dreary turning off the Blackfriars Road. Torrance, in his quality of Mendel Schatz, had a near and dear relative in those parts who owned a second-hand clothes shop, and several times a year he would visit him—to talk Polish and Yiddish, eat fish fried in oil, and wallow for a time in the indulgence of being an honest man, a man rid of poses and pretences, clad in familiar and reposeful realities.

He was returning from such a visit, going northwards on foot till he should encounter a taxi, and he marked with no interest at all the shabby crowd collected at the entry to the by-street. There was a light, a naphtha flare, or something of the kind, in the midst of them. And a brass band at the heart of it commenced to bray a hymn-tune and men's and women's voices joined in.

"Onward, Christian so-oldiers,
Marching as to war——"

"Salvation Arm——" Torrance halted in his stride as abruptly as in his comment. For a woman's voice was leading the singing, a true and trained soprano, spending itself in sweetness upon that barren waste of a place, upon the clownish riff-raff that had come to jeer and remained to listen. And Torrance knew that voice. When last he had heard it, it had been raised in that song-success, "Manana," the final number in "The Cigarette Girl."

He pressed forward upon the rear rank of the little crowd, and his height enabled him to look over their heads into the little circle of bandsmen and women who stood and sang around the naphtha flare—saints of the slums, apostles of the pavements! And there, her face pale and luminous in the depth of her poke bonnet, was Elsie May!

There was no possibility of mistaking her; it was she. And even with that old and hackneyed hymn her voice was holding her audience—that, and the almost hypnotic gift that had always been hers of alluring and compelling the eyes and the minds of men.

She had not seen him, and he did not desire that she should. He backed out quietly and went his way. He knew now where she was; the how and the why of it did not concern him. He who seeks motives in another is kin to the vivisector; he gives a good deal of pain for a minimum of profit. And let it here be said to the credit of Ben Torrance that, although he had a story which would have convulsed and delighted his world, and other worlds wider than that, never did he breathe a word of it.

But if Torrance had been curious concerning the how and the why, there were no fewer than four men who could, if they would, have told him. They were the four who supped with Elsie May after the theatre in her little jewel-box of a flat overlooking the Green Park on the night before Kitty Vincent's promotion. There was a circle in which these little suppers were famous, and invitations to them were coveted.

Elsie May liked her company well mixed. The merit of such a social plane as hers is that you need know nobody and you can and may know anybody. Upon this evening, for instance, there was Lord Francis Sangrer, six-foot-three in his socks, the heir to a

marquessate, and a wearer of the Victoria Cross. The trouble with him was that he wanted to make her a future marchioness, with himself as the corresponding marquess, and Elsie May had other ideas regarding her future. Then there were Maximilian Jones, the portrait-painter, who was to paint her for the Academy, a silent, pleasant, bearded man, and his friend Bates, the American artist from Paris, whom he had obtained permission to bring with him—a tall, lean man, long-faced and saturnine, whose deeply-tanned countenance and hands contrasted oddly with the linen of his evening attire.

And lastly, to spice the gathering with a quality of the bizarre, as garlic spices a salad, there was Father Enderby, an Anglican Catholic priest, in ordinary clerical clothes. He was a man not much over thirty years of age, with a sober, agreeable, shaven face and very steady and splendid eyes. Yet for all his habitual gravity he could break readily into a smile.

The last three were already in the little white-panelled drawing-room when Elsie May came in, accompanied by Lord Francis, who had driven her back from the theatre. Bates, the American, was the only one present who did not know her. Jones introduced him.

"From Paris, isn't it?" she said, while Lord Francis took her furs. "Funny, isn't it? I've never been to Paris; I'm the only person I know who hasn't."

"I expect you're the only person whom everybody knows who hasn't," suggested Bates.

She laughed, and gave him a quick glance of estimation. Then to Lord Francis: "Oh, Frankie, I'm so thirsty! Do get me a drink!"

Lord Francis unfolded his long form, section by section, from the low armchair in which he had coiled it down, crossed the room in two strides to the dining-room door, paused, and turned.

"Champagne?" he inquired.

"Oh, don't be a fool, Frankie!" cried the girl. "I want some lemon-squash."

She turned to the others in mimic distress. "People are always trying to make me drink champagne; I hate it. The only times I touch it are when I dine out on Sunday nights and I'm too cowardly to say that I'm a teetotaller—it sounds so dowdy, somehow. Are you a teetotaller, Mr. Bates?"

"No," answered Bates. "But I'm very fond of lemon-squash."

"Drink is all right," put in Father Enderby, unexpectedly; "and there are worse evils even than drunkenness. It's compulsory drinking, such as your champagne on Sunday nights, Elsie, which really justifies prohibition."

That was the manner of the talk that flitted about the round table at supper, froth upon deep waters, but at least the waters were deep. Bates was seated where he could watch his hostess. Only the stage, he decided, created the demand which such types are produced to supply—and only one sort of stage at that. Elsie May was at least intelligent; there was an occasional film of wit upon her utterances, and she had unmistakably a real and compelling power of personality. Yet because she was pretty to the point of genuine beauty, her other qualities must for ever be subordinated to her physical attractions.

IT was after supper, in the little drawing-room to which they went for coffee and cigarettes, that Bates was smitten by a momentary suspicion of the character of the establishment, for his hostess went at once to a little cabinet and took forth two packs of cards. He raised dubious eyebrows; but Maximilian Jones caught his eye in time and gave him a reassuring wink.

"I say," said Elsie May; "let's play something."

A groan from the deep chair in which Lord Francis lay buried. "Oh, don't let's!" pleaded the tall man.

"You shut up, Frankie!" retorted the girl. "Mr. Bates, do you play anything?"

"I have been known to play poker," replied Bates, solemnly.

"Oh, that's no good," she said. "I've never played poker. But we must do something. Who'll cut the cards with me for a fiver?"

Bates rose. "I will," he said. Half a minute later he took a five-pound note from his pocket, laid it on the table, and went back to his chair. Lord Francis, ordered from the repose, however, rose, picked up Bates's bank-note, and once more retired. Maximilian Jones lost and paid in Treasury notes.

"Now, Father Enderby," cried Elsie May, gaily. "Come and win Maximilian's fiver."

The priest shook his head. "Thanks, no," he said. "I don't believe in gambling for money; I consider it's paltry, because mere money in itself is paltry stuff. So I really think I'd better be going."

"Wait a minute," cried Elsie May. "What do you believe in gambling for, then? Diamonds, or what?"

The priest smiled. "Oh, dear, no. Why should I start playing with beads at my time of life? I'm a busy man, my dear Elsie!"

"Then what would you gamble for?"

"I'll tell you, if you really want to know," he answered.

"Tell me, then!"

Bates, watching, saw that the vivacity of her face had faded to a hard calm. They were looking each other in the eye.

"Very good," said the priest, cheerily. "I'll cut the cards with you, and if I win I have the right to command what I choose of you; and if I lose you have the same right over me. Provided, of course, that the loser be not required to do anything evil."

The girl was silent; they still stared each other in the eye. Lord Francis sat up.

"Look here——" he began.

"Shut up, Frankie," said the girl, automatically. "Nothing—evil?" she demanded.

"Nothing evil, of course," confirmed the priest.

Again a silence. Then, suddenly, Elsie May burst forth: "I'll do it. And if I win—"

"I understand," smiled Father Enderby.

"If you win, I shall catch it pretty badly. Shall I shuffle these cards first? Right!"

They poured through his fingers as fluently as water; Father Enderby had evidently handled cards before. The others drew round to watch.

He laid the pack on the table and stepped back.

"Cut as soon as you please, Elsie," he said, pleasantly.

She gave him a look with a hint of a scowl in it. Her hand hovered over the pack, and she cut.

"The queen of diamonds," announced Father Enderby. "And now to beat that!"

With no hesitation or delay, he lifted the four or five top cards and showed the bottom one of them. It was the king of hearts!

The priest raised a hand. "Listen to me! This is the command I lay on you: Henceforth serve God and none other than Him, with all your strength, with all your courage,

He lifted the four or five top cards and showed the bottom one of them. It was the king of hearts!

And there they were again, staring across the table at one another.

"Well?" Elsie May demanded. "I've lost; you've won. What awful thing are you going to do to me?"

with all your gifts. From this hour, from this minute, you are done with toys and fooleries. Serve God!"

He turned and left the room. Next day Kitty Vincent got the chance that made her.

ANOTHER "Q. Q." STORY

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

By

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN

ILLUSTRATED BY S. SEYMOUR LUCAS

"THIS will be the last cigar I shall smoke as a free man, Quayne," said Sir Humphrey Maule, quietly, as he reached for the matches.

Q. Q. raised his eyebrows.

"Going back into harness? I thought the Indian Government would be after you again Moscow is getting far too much of a run for its money south of the Himalayas."

Our visitor was Sir Humphrey Maule, who had retired a few months back after a career in India that had remained unknown to the general public until the chorus of Press encomiums at its conclusion made it aware that yet another great servant of the Empire had finished his day's work. Head of a special branch of the Political Department, I remembered.

He sat now, big and impressive, in the chair by Q. Q.'s desk, lighting his cigar.

"No," he said. "I'm on my way to give myself up to the police."

Q. Q.'s quick glance challenged his seriousness.

"Income-tax returns—and a tender conscience?" He smiled quizzically at him.

Sir Humphrey finished his long puff of cigar-smoke.

"Murder." He sat back in his chair, grimly stolid.

I have rarely seen Q. Q. startled—but he was startled then—startled and instantaneously incredulous.

"You're joking, Maule?"

"Not in the least."

"My dear chap! *Murder?*" Q. Q. puzzled at him.

"Murder."

"But whom? Some would-be assassin?"

"Jimmy Loftus."

"Good God!"

"Yes—my best pal."

Q. Q. stared at him, frankly bewildered.

"*Jimmy Loftus!* But—in the name of everything—why?"

"I wish I knew."

"*How*—then?"

Sir Humphrey looked at him, spoke slowly and deliberately.

"I know—and yet I don't know."

The Chief's hand tapped in exasperation on his desk.

"You are talking in riddles, Maule."

"It is a riddle to me—the whole business. That's why I've come to you, Quayne. I did it—I must have done it—I somehow know I did it, can give you a story of the occurrence, although another part of me is, so to speak, loud in indignant denial—and the circumstantial evidence is beyond doubt. I don't envy my counsel his job of defending me. He hasn't a shred of a case. As an honest man, I should have to say I was guilty if I were asked. It's Jack Ketch for me all right. But—although I shouldn't dream for a moment of putting in the plea—I'd rather have a quick finish than a living death—I'd just like to know for my own personal satisfaction whether it oughtn't to be Broadmoor." He spoke with a grim succinctness, knocked off a little ash from his cigar, and looked straight at Q. Q. "You've solved some pretty queer mysteries, Quayne—we've solved some of them together—as a personal favour, the last probably I shall ask of you, I want you to solve this one for me. When Jack Ketch pulls the drop from under me, I want to go into the next world knowing *why* I did it."

"H'm! When and where do you say this occurrence happened?"

"In my rooms—last night."

"And where is——" Q. Q. hesitated, delicately, "Loftus—now?"

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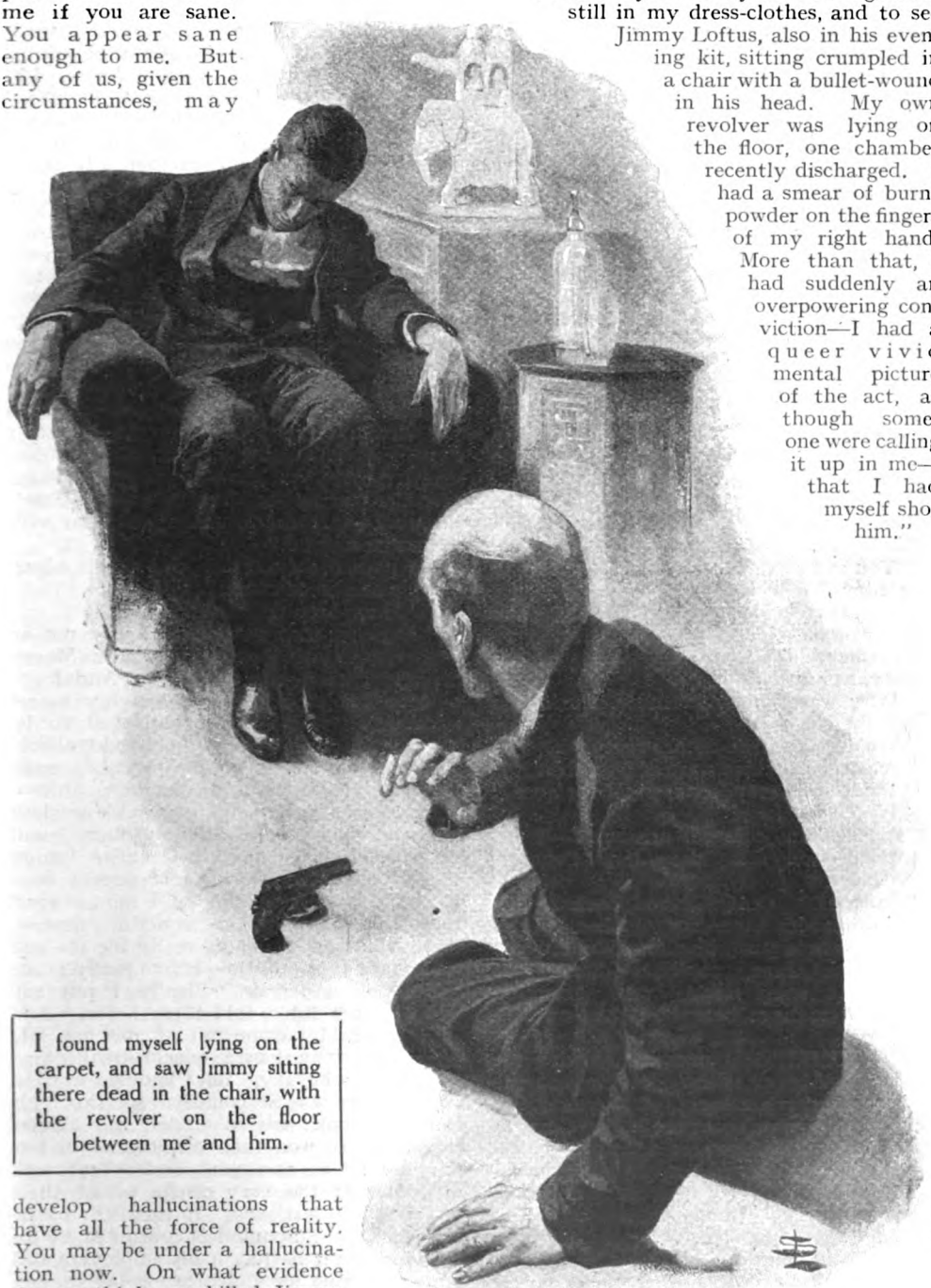
"In my sitting-room. Behind a locked door. I sent my man off for the day. He doesn't sleep on the premises, you know."

"H'm! No immediate hurry for the police, then. You ask me if you are sane. You appear sane enough to me. But any of us, given the circumstances, may develop hallucinations that have all the force of reality. You may be under a hallucination now. On what evidence do you think you killed Jimmy Loftus?"



I found myself lying on the carpet, and saw Jimmy sitting there dead in the chair, with the revolver on the floor between me and him.

Sir Humphrey smiled again, grimly.

"On the evidence of all my senses, Quayne. There is no hallucination about this. I woke up at seven o'clock this morning to find myself in my own sitting-room, still in my dress-clothes, and to see Jimmy Loftus, also in his evening kit, sitting crumpled in a chair with a bullet-wound in his head. My own revolver was lying on the floor, one chamber recently discharged. I had a smear of burnt powder on the fingers of my right hand. More than that, I had suddenly an overpowering conviction—I had a queer vivid mental picture of the act, as though someone were calling it up in me—that I had myself shot him."

"Without a motive?" Q. Q. interjected the question.

"Without the slightest motive. Jimmy and I were the closest pals—the nearest thing I ever had to a brother. You can guess my horror at what I saw." Sir Humphrey's grim mouth clenched tight again for a moment. "The only explanation that I can give myself is that—although I've never had the slightest symptom of epilepsy—I did it in a sort of epileptic fit."

"H'm! If you had done it in an epileptic fit you would probably have remembered nothing at all about it when you woke up—and you *do* remember, you say?"

"Yes—in a queer sort of way. I remember it as one remembers a somnambulistic act performed in a dream—like something divorced from one's real self. Half of me protests violently that I did not, could not do it. Yet if I were challenged I could not help but say, with full conviction, automatically—ghastly and motiveless as the thing is—'Yes, I did it.' In fact, there's an immense and curious impulse in me—the usual murderer's impulse, I suppose—to rush out and proclaim the fact."

"That was why you were going to the police-station?"

Sir Humphrey shrugged his shoulders.

"You can't expect a man of my stamp to give himself the ignominy of dodging the police. There's the fact. I must take the consequences. I prefer to go half-way to meet them. It leaves me some personal dignity, at any rate."

"Why was Jimmy Loftus in your rooms last night?"

"We'd had a little dinner-party."

"A party? There were others, then?"

"Two. But they left soon after eleven."

"Who were they?"

"A Russian refugee aristocrat—Count Murovieff—and his daughter, Countess Stravinsky."

"Indeed!" Q. Q. leaned back in his chair, tapped his finger-tips together. "Let's have the whole yarn, Maule. Why did you have those three people to dinner last night? It must have been something important to have brought Loftus out."

SIR HUMPHREY paused to revive the glow of his cigar, to collect his thoughts for a commencement. "There's something in your guess about the Indian Government, Quayne. I *have* been approached—I'd more than half promised to go out again, in fact. Naturally, I began to sit up and take a little notice of things Indian again, to scrounge around for scraps of useful information. About ten days ago I met a couple of very interesting people—met them at my sister's house—this Count Murovieff and his daughter, regular *ancien régime*, red-hot anti-Bolshie. It was the lady I got into conversation with first—fascinating creature, beautiful—and she did me the honour of knowing my name. A compliment rare enough to be appreciated." He smiled grimly. "She asked me if I were going back to India. I gave a non-committal sort of answer—as you know, I'm not the sort that unbosoms himself to casual ladies. And then I had a shock. 'Because if you are, Sir Humphrey,' she said, 'I can give you some information that will be of the greatest use to you. Would you like to put your finger on Tretiakeff?' You can guess I sat up pretty sharply and took quite a lot of notice at that. Only the very inner circles know even the name of Tretiakeff—a most elusive bird and the hidden manipulator of all the Soviet intrigues in India. At that moment her father came up—a white-haired, intellectual-looking little dwarf of a man, more like a professor than an aristocrat. She introduced us—and then my sister swooped down on us—mustn't have any interesting conversation in her drawing-room, you know—against the usages of polite society—one has to 'mix'—that's her word—talk meaningless ape-chatter with the entire cageful."

He paused for another pull at his cigar. Q. Q. made no comment.

Sir Humphrey resumed.

"Anyway, they managed to give me an invitation to visit them at their flat in Mount Street. I went—the next day. And I got quite a lot of information—highly secret information which—as it happened to be already in our possession—I could check. They hated the Bolshie *régime* quite thoroughly, father and daughter alike—and no wonder, if their story was even half true. A story of torture, robbery, and murder of pretty near their entire family that would have been a gold nugget to a Riga special correspondent. I went several times, and each time I got something more—with a hint of something really big if—and they made this proviso—I were really going out to India again. Finally I put my cards on the table, told them I was. And then the rabbit came out of the hat. It seems the lady has a cousin—real name Baron Raschevsky, but known to the Communists as Stapouloff. To save his skin he took service under the Soviet Government—won their confidence—and is now second in command under Tretiakeff in India, at the very centre of all their underground intrigues. If they are to be believed, Mr. Stapouloff is consumed by an undying secret hatred of his employers and is only waiting for a chance to play them a thoroughly dirty trick—to blow the entire

Soviet organization in India sky-high, in fact. The long and the short of it was that they promised to put me into touch with this very interesting gentleman."

Once more Sir Humphrey paused for a puff or two at his cigar.

"Of course, that isn't the kind of information that can be ignored," he went on. "I thought the best thing to do was to go and tell Loftus about it—it's down his street, as you know. I did so—and he was quite considerably interested. Naturally, he was very curious to meet my Russian friends. He asked me to invite them to dinner—and not to mention that he would be present."

"And last night was the dinner?" said Q. Q.

"Yes. We had a very pleasant evening. Of course, I had said nothing about Loftus coming along. He turned up about five minutes after they did, and he was the best of company—really brilliant—you know what he could be when he was in the mood. They all got on splendidly together."

'No sign of recognition on either side?"

Sir Humphrey shook his head.

"No. Not the least. Of course, I didn't get a chance to talk to Loftus."

"And then what happened?"

"At a little after eleven the Russians went away. I accompanied them downstairs, saw them into a taxi. I went up again to my rooms, where Loftus was sitting waiting for me—and then—that's the confoundedly queer part about it, Quayne—I can't really remember *with my whole self* what happened."

"Tell me what the part of yourself that remembers or seems to remember most has to say."

"I've got a sort of dream-knowledge—a conviction rather than a memory—of having gone straight to the drawer of my desk where I keep a revolver, taken out the weapon, and deliberately shot Loftus—without any reason whatever—as he sat there in the chair. And then I can't remember anything at all, until I woke up this morning, found myself lying on the carpet, and saw Jimmy sitting there dead in the chair, with the revolver on the floor between me and him."

"And the other part of you—what does that remember?"

"Nothing at all. It's a blank from the time I saw those people disappearing down the street in their taxi—until the moment that I woke up this morning."

"H'm!" Q. Q. sat with closely-pressed lips. "What are your domestic arrangements, Maule?"

"It's a service-flat. The management sent up the dinner from the restaurant and did the waiting. Cleared up after we had finished, while we were in the sitting-room. They do all the work of the place, you know—except my sitting-room. I don't like unknown people messing about with my papers. My man does that."

"He doesn't sleep on the premises, you said. Was he there last night?"

"I let him off before ten o'clock—when he had brought in the whisky decanter and a couple of siphons. As I told you, I sent him off for the day directly he arrived at seven-thirty this morning. My sitting-room is just as it was last night, with poor Jimmy sitting in that chair—behind a locked door."

Q. Q. pondered for a moment.

"You say you saw your guests depart in their taxi. How did you get back into your rooms? Did you let yourself in with a key—or did you leave the door open?"

"I went up in the lift—by Jove, yes, it comes back to me now—I found my door shut, and when I felt for my bunch of keys I found I must have left them inside—I had to ring the bell."

"Who opened the door?"

"Jimmy, of course—yes, I remember that—besides, there was no one else in the flat."

"Was he quite normal?"

"Well, we'd had a good dinner—and one or two whiskies-and-sodas afterwards—and, yes, we were a bit cheerful, I suppose."

"And now can you remember anything else at all after Loftus let you into your rooms—apart from your dream-conviction that then or subsequently you shot him?"

Sir Humphrey shook his head.

"Nothing at all—other than that, it is a blank. But, I say, Quayne!" a sudden excitement came into his voice, "it's a funny thing about those keys! I could swear I hadn't got them in my pocket when I rang at that door—I remember ringing and ringing—Jimmy was slow in tumbling to what had happened—yet I certainly had them in my trouser-pocket when I woke up this morning. I remember turning them out quite normally with all my other things when I changed out of my dress-kit. Here they are." He fished out a bunch of keys from his pocket, held them up. "It's an action so automatic to shift them from one kit to another that I hadn't given them a thought. But I certainly didn't have them last night—unless I was far more drunk than I thought."

"That, of course, is a possibility," said Q. Q., quietly. "I'd like to know a little more about these guests of yours. Can you describe the lady?"

"Tall, slim, raven-black hair, wonderful

"Are these your friends, Maule?" Sir Humphrey looked at the photographs, uttered a sharp exclamation. "By Jove, yes! Both of them!"

large grey eyes—beautiful as a goddess—gives you a thrill to look at her."

"H'm!" commented Q. Q., grimly; "enthusiasm is not description. You were more definitely helpful about her father. Wait a moment." He got up, went across to a large cabinet index-file on the farther wall of the room, returned with a couple of "jackets." He sat down again, opened the dossiers, took out three or four photographs from each, spread them on his desk. "Are these your friends, Maule?"

Sir Humphrey looked at the photographs, uttered a sharp exclamation.

"By Jove, yes! Both of them!"

Q. Q. smiled in quiet satisfaction. "I thought I was guessing right," he said. "But I am surprised that Loftus didn't tell you anything about those people when you rejoined him. He had a quite special interest in them both—and he certainly recognized them. The father's real name—he has, of course, many *aliases*—is Dr. Hugo Weidmann. He was at one time a well-known psycho-analyst in Vienna. Then he got into an unpleasant scandal, cleared out of Austria, and went into the German Secret Service, a line of business in which his professional experience was extremely useful. Over here, during the war, he posed as a Russian reformer who had fled from the Czarist police prior to 1914—and he brought off one or two really big *coups* before our people got on his track and he vanished into thin air."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Sir Humphrey. "You're making me feel an awful fool, Quayne!"

"The daughter's name," continued Q. Q.,

imperturbably, "is Clara Weidmann—originally, that is to say; the names she has since given herself would fill a page of 'Who's Who.' She was certainly one of the most efficient spies we ever had to deal with. And she got clear away—but not before she had murdered, in very mysterious circumstances, one of Loftus's best men. Jimmy swore he would get her sooner or later—that was why, evidently, half-recognizing both from your description, he asked you to arrange a little *diner intime* so that he could put the matter beyond doubt. You, of course, serving in India all your life, would know nothing of either of them." He leaned back in his chair, finger-tips together. "I'm beginning to see a little daylight in this, Maule."

"I'm damned if I am," replied Sir Humphrey. "With all that. Who are these people working for now?"

"For the Soviet Government, evidently. They knew or guessed that you might be going back to India. You're a formidable adversary, Maule—on your own ground. They did the clever thing—nobbled you from the start. If you had taken all their information seriously—naturally they saw to it that all you could check should be genuine—and had put yourself in the hands of Mr Stapouloff, you'd have got yourself into a pretty mess."

"Well, that's out of the question now, anyway. I don't go to India—I go to the Old Bailey and to a nasty little ceremony in a prison-yard early one morning. For there's no doubt about it—mad or not—I shot poor Loftus."

Q. Q. looked at him.

"Doesn't it occur to you, Maule, how extremely convenient it is to these two people that Loftus—they certainly recognized him, as he recognized them—should be dead, and you completely out of the way?"

"Yes—but——" Sir Humphrey frowned in a desperation of thought. "It can't be more than a coincidence. I saw them go—I'm certain of that. How could they have got back, killed Loftus, and—this is the vital point—given me the conviction that I had done it myself? *How could they?*"

"That, Maule," said Q. Q., caressing his chin, "we're going to try to find out."

Sir Humphrey leaned forward in a sudden hypothesis.

"They couldn't have drugged me—*made* me murder Jimmy, could they?" he asked, desperately. "It wouldn't go down with a jury, I know, but it means a lot to *me*. It isn't possible—just wildly possible—is it? Queer things happen in India, you know."

Q. Q. shrugged his shoulders.

"They are very clever people," he said, as he took a sheet of note-paper and commenced to write. He wrote only a few quick words, folded the paper, reached for an envelope, put in the note, stuck it down, and addressed it. "What number in Mount Street?" Sir Humphrey told him. He added it, looked across to me. "A little job for you, Mr. Creighton. Take this note to the Countess Stravinsky and give it to her personally." He glanced at his watch. "It is now just eleven o'clock. You will probably find her at home. She may have something to say to you. Stay and listen to it—stay just as long as she likes to keep you—make the lady's acquaintance, in fact." He smiled at me. "But when you do leave, rejoin us at Sir Humphrey's rooms. Give him the address, Maule."

Sir Humphrey gave me his card, and a few minutes later I was in a taxi speeding towards Mount Street.

A PRIM, foreign-looking maid led me into a large drawing-room, furnished with an exotic and bizarre luxury, a room of rich Chinese blues touched with vivid greens, where gilt Buddhas and grotesque Hindu gods niched themselves against a simplicity of wall.

"Vait 'ere," said the maid. "I vill tell ze Countess."

I stood there, feeling my heart thump, and waited. And I craved for my automatic, so thoughtlessly left behind. The atmosphere of that room seemed pregnant with something mysteriously sinister. What drama was going to be precipitated by the sealed thin note I fingered.

I turned from an absent-minded stare at a squat white-jade Chinese idol to see the Countess standing in the room, the door-curtain just falling behind her.

She was beautiful—beautiful, I can only reiterate the word—with such a purity of beauty, such a grave perfection of Madonna-like loveliness, that her presence set me quivering in a surge of awe that overwhelmed the cynicism of reason. Her large, clear grey eyes—wonderful under the raven-black hair, smoothed with the slightest ripple back from her brows—rested upon me in mute inquiry.

"The Countess Stravinsky?" I said.

"Yes." Her voice, in the utterance of that one syllable, was surprisingly musical on a rich, deep, vibrant note.

I held out the envelope.

She took it, tore it open, read the missive. I saw a sudden hardness come into her beautiful face. Once more the wonderful grey eyes were resting on me.

"You know what is in this note?"

"No, madame."

The hardness vanished from her face—

vanished so that a moment later one could not recall what it had been. She smiled—a sudden opening of dazzling fascination.

"You are a——" she hesitated, "an *employé* of Mr. Quentin Quayne?"

I had no cue for my answer. I risked the truth.

"Yes, madame."

Her eyes ranged over me, summed me up.

"You seem to be a gentleman," she said.

I bowed.

"Were you told to bring back an answer to this?" She indicated the sheet of paper in her hand.

"I was told merely to hand it to you personally, madame." Confound Q. Q.! Why the devil hadn't he told me what was in that letter? I should have had at least some idea of what to do or say.

The large grey eyes rested on me again. She pondered something I could not guess at. Then again she smiled.

"Will you not sit down, Mr.—Mr.——?" she finished on a note of interrogation.

"Creighton," I said.

I took the soft armchair to which she gestured. She sat down opposite me on a settee. Our eyes met. A part of me reminded me insistently that she was a spy, a murderess. Another part of me, deep down, elemental, blindly instinctive, rose in revolt against an accusation that seemed patently absurd. Q. Q.—Sir Humphrey—both might have been mistaken. Photographs are the most deceptive of evidence. These thoughts flashed through me in a matter of seconds. She was pondering again—pondering, perhaps, what was required of her. What *was* required of her? What the devil was in that note?

Suddenly she smiled once more, stretched out her slim white arm to a cigarette-box on a little table, held it out to me.

"Will you smoke, Mr. Creighton?" she asked, in that rich, deep voice.

I accepted. She took one herself, reached for the matches, struck a light, held it to my cigarette—her large grey eyes close to mine evoked a peculiar intimate start deep down in me, a sudden surge and tumult of blood, over which I set my teeth—lit her own. She dropped the still-lighted match into an antique bronze tripod brazier—Chinese and grotesque—which stood close to my right hand.

"You are going straight back to Mr. Quayne when you leave here?"

"Yes, madame."

"You are not in a hurry?"

"No, madame."

A quick look came from those clear grey eyes, large under the raven-black hair, a look that shot through me like a searchlight. It was instantly veiled, replaced by a smile that was languorously serene.

I SAT, my heart thumping, waiting for her next words. I heard the faint ticking of a clock across the room. And, as I waited, I became gradually conscious of a subtle incense-like perfume filling the atmosphere, a diffusion of cloying aromatic sweetness, semi-pungent to my nostrils, that made me automatically take a deep breath. It filled my lungs, seemed to mount to my head. I pulled myself out of a momentary dizziness, glanced round at the brazier into which she had thrown her match. A slender stem of grey smoke ascended from the bowl, coiled into a lazy spiral at its summit. Was this some sinister trick? No!—impossible!—fantastic! My suspicions were running away with me. Yet I dared not—dumb in the awe she inspired in me—break her silence. She remained immobile, lost in thoughts, her face a miracle of calm beauty.

I resigned myself. That slender stem of grey smoke continued to ascend, and with that subtly pervasive aromatic odour I inhaled at every breath, a numbness in myself—imperceptible at first—crept over me. My brain dulled. I relaxed, luxuriously, languorously, carelessly scornful of the vigilant alertness to which a moment before I had endeavoured to hold fast. I lost the clear sense of my identity. And in place of my normal self, obscure primitive impulses stirred in me. They frightened me. I found myself yearning for a mad kiss from that exquisite mouth. My arms ached to enfold that lithe slender figure, to crush it frenziedly in an embrace that would enforce reciprocation. My brain whirled at the thought of it—it seemed that the next moment I should spring forward, hot-breathed upon her—flung from my seat by an impulse beyond civilized volition. Yet I did not move. I felt something hurt the fingers of my right hand on my knee. It was my cigarette, forgotten, which had burnt down to them. With an immense muscular effort I tossed the stump into the brazier whence the grey smoke ascended. In that last flicker of normal consciousness, I glanced at the watch upon my wrist. To my surprise, it marked only half-past eleven.

The silence had lasted a time beyond my computation. She turned her large clear eyes upon me, smiled. I perceived her with a vision that was blurred, heard her—deep-toned, thrillingly sonorous—with a dizzy brain.

"You are thinking things about me—unpleasant things?"

"Madame—I—I——" My own voice sounded strange to me.

She leaned forward, exquisitely seductive. Again I felt that primitive reckless urge, almost irresistible, electric, spontaneous, in every fibre of me, repressed it with a last spasm of will.

" I want you to look in my eyes—and see if you can believe them."

The eyes came close, wide open, eyes of a strange clear grey, the pupils peculiarly fascinating, seeking mine.

" Madame—I—I——" That direct gaze was insupportable. I dropped my own—gasped in a suffocation, my brain in a dizzy whirl.

" Look! Keep on looking! "

I looked into those eyes that focused themselves on mine—looked—kept on looking—saw nothing but those eyes—looked into them for an endless time where I lost perception of all else but those two clear grey eyes holding mine until I could no longer turn away my gaze. My arm jerked of itself—went stiff. An immense fatigue weighed heavy on my shoulders.

" *Lean back!* " A last flicker of resistance leaped up in me. No! no!—I—I mustn't. " Lean back! " I ceded, relaxed, felt suddenly comfortable.

It might have been æons after, I saw, mistily, vaguely, as through my eyelashes, the Countess standing tall above me. By her side was a sharp-faced, white-haired, intellectual-looking little dwarf of a man, peering eagerly at me.

" Yes—I think so." Her voice came through — through cotton-wool — to my dulled senses. I could not move—had no will to move. I leaned back, locked in a complete passivity I accepted with a last tiny fragment of my consciousness

" Answer me, Mr. Creighton."

" Yes." I heard myself answer—a voice that was far away from me—a voice that spoke with surprising (only I had lost the capacity for surprise) promptness of obedience.

AND then — and then — I remember nothing more, until—I cannot say to this day how—I found myself in a taxi, speeding through the London traffic, and knowing quite clearly that I was on my way to Q. Q. at Sir Humphrey Maule's rooms. What had happened in that flat? How did I get into that taxi? I could not remember. I could only remember, very clearly, that I was on my way to Q. Q.—that I *must* get to Q. Q.—for a reason still obscure to me—with the minimum of delay. And then another alarm shot into my mind. Was I really going to Sir Humphrey's flat—or was the taxi-driver taking me, under sinister orders, to some other destination? I had not the least recollection of giving him the address. I had scarce grappled with this sudden panic when the cab stopped, in the quiet street off St. James's where Sir Humphrey lived, at the number given on the card I took, for verification, from my pocket. I got out.

" Who gave you this address? " I asked.

The taxi-driver stared at me.

" You did, sir," he said.

I hurried into the building, cursing at the exhibition I had made of myself. The lift shot me up to the floor occupied by Sir Humphrey. I rang. Sir Humphrey himself opened the door.

I followed him along a short passage, into an unfamiliar sitting-room adorned with Indian trophies. A white sheet was thrown over something shapeless in a chair near the table. In another chair, near a writing-desk, Q. Q. was sitting. He smiled at me.

I stopped. What was it I had to do when I saw Q. Q.? What was the obscure impulse which surged up in me, which made my fingers work nervously of themselves? A cloud was over my brain. I felt my muscles go spontaneously rigid. Q. Q. still smiled.

" A knife, Mr. Creighton? " he said, blandly—held out an ivory paper-knife.

I took it automatically, felt my fingers clench tightly over it without my volition—and then, as though a trigger were pulled inside me that discharged a sudden nervous force, with no clear consciousness of what I was doing, but under an impulse that filled me suddenly to the exclusion of all else, I sprang at him, stabbed straight at his chest with the paper-knife. And even as I delivered the blow, I had an obscure half-knowledge that it was all right, that it was only harmless make-believe—a complaisance that reconciled conflicting compulsions.

Sir Humphrey leaped forward with a startled cry, clutched my wrist.

Q. Q. smiled. He had sat motionless, without a tremor.

" Let him go. The wrong knife, Mr. Creighton. Give him that Indian dagger, Maule."

Sir Humphrey hesitated.

" Give it to him."

He obeyed. With obvious reluctance he handed me an Indian dagger in place of the paper-knife he had wrenched from my grasp. I stood quivering, in a peculiar suspension of thought, of all volition. It was as though I was under a spell.

" Obey the command given you, Mr. Creighton," said Q. Q., quietly.

At the words once more I sprang—and as I did so I realized with an overwhelming

shock what it was I had in my hand, what it was I had been commanded to do—*murder!—murder Q. Q.!* That realization checked me like a bullet striking me in mid-course. In an immense revulsion of all myself, a violent, spontaneous, shattering recoil from the atrocity I was about to commit, I stopped dead, flung the dagger from me. My brain suddenly cleared. I stood trembling, dazed, bewildered, ready to drop with humiliation. Good God! What would Q. Q. think of me? I could have burst into hysterical tears.

"My God, sir!" I stammered. "What—what's the matter with me? Am I mad?—or—or——?" I had no explanation to offer, even to myself. The lack of it terrified me. I looked at that dagger lying on the floor, and felt suddenly physically sick. I swayed on my feet.

Q. Q. rose quietly from his chair, put his hand on my shoulder.

"All right, Mr. Creighton." His eyes looked into mine, sent reassurance into me, braced me to command of myself. "You've been making yourself useful for once—that's all." He smiled. "Sit down in that chair—and pull yourself together." Once more his eyes looked straight, compellingly, into mine. "You are quite normal again—*quite*—you understand that?"

"Yes, sir," I gasped, and subsided weakly into the chair.

"WELL, Maule, do you see the point of that little experiment?"

"I'm damned if I do!" Sir Humphrey looked utterly mystified.

"Then I'll tell you. I sent Mr. Creighton round to your lady-friend of last night—she's the more dangerous of the pair—with a note he was instructed to deliver only into the Countess Stravinsky's own hand. I've no doubt he did so. That note was as follows"—Q. Q. smiled grimly as he paused—"'On behalf of Mr. James Loftus, Mr. Quentin Quayne presents his compliments to Fräulein Clara Weidmann.' Rather a shock to the lady, I'm afraid." He smiled again. "Now do you begin to see?"

"Not in the least."

Q. Q. turned to me.

"What happened in the flat at Mount Street, Mr. Creighton?"

I tried with all my might to remember—found myself baffled with an absolute blankness. It exasperated me, humiliated me anew.

"I—I'm sorry, sir," I stammered. "I don't know what's the matter with me—I can't remember anything about it."

Q. Q. nodded. His voice was kindly as he spoke.

"Never mind. I can guess." He turned again to Sir Humphrey. "Put yourself in the lady's place. Last night she meets Jimmy Loftus, realizes that she is recognized, and eliminates him very cleverly. This morning she learns not only that Quentin Quayne is aware of her identity, but that Quentin Quayne holds her responsible for Loftus's death. Obviously, Quentin Quayne also must be eliminated at once. How is she to do it? One method, at least, particularly after last night, would instantly suggest itself to her—a temptation I dangled in front of her, in fact. You will remember that I carefully told Mr. Creighton not to hurry away. I put an opportunity into her hands."

"Opportunity?" queried Sir Humphrey, still puzzled.

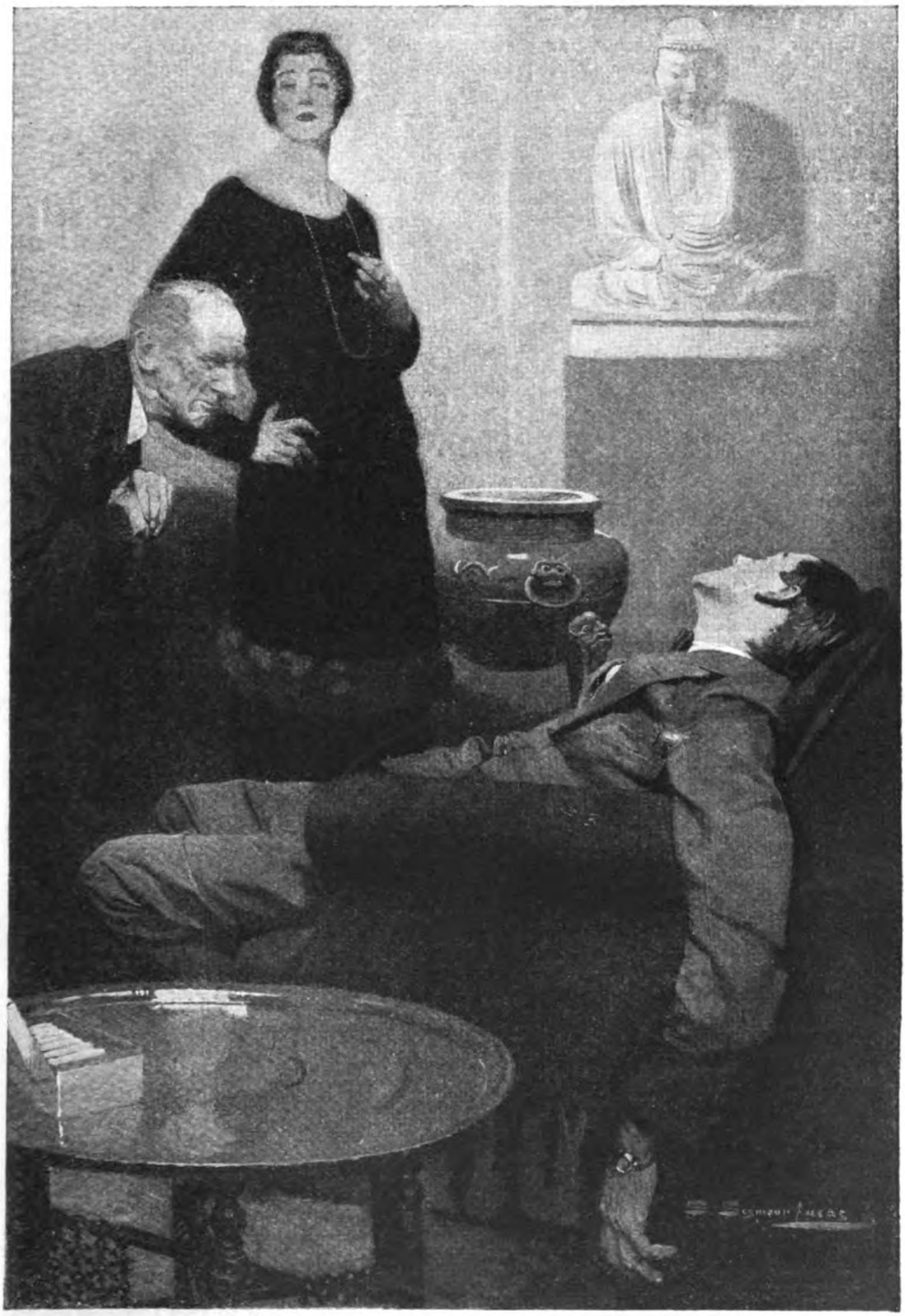
"Hypnosis," said Q. Q., succinctly. "You forget her father was professor of psychiatry in Vienna—and she was an apt pupil. She undoubtedly hypnotized Creighton, and gave him the post-hypnotic suggestion, with the safeguard that his memory should be an absolute blank on the matter, that he should stab me directly he saw me. I noticed his fingers working the moment he came into the room. You saw for yourself what happened."

"Good God!" groaned Sir Humphrey, in a sudden anguish. "And they must have hypnotized *me* also!—made me kill poor Jimmy! I really did it, then! That proves it!"

"It proves nothing of the sort. It proves just the opposite. One of my reasons for making this somewhat dangerous experiment was to establish beyond doubt whether it is or is not possible to hypnotize a subject into committing a genuine murder. It is easy enough to make him act a dummy one—but it is a hotly-disputed point whether he will or will not obey a suggestion to do the real thing. Your lady-friend was doubtless quite aware of this—but the case was urgent with her—she had to take a long chance if she was to do anything at all. She took it—after all, the possibility has never been definitely disproved. And I took a chance that, being quite ready for him, I might be quicker than Mr. Creighton if he meant business with a real knife in his hand. You saw the difference in his behaviour when he had the paper-knife and when he had the real thing. No, Maule," he concluded, decisively, "my experiment proved beyond doubt that whatever hypnotic suggestion was given you last night—your drinks were drugged, of course—you did *not* murder Jimmy Loftus. If the thing can be done at all it could be done with Creighton. She tried. It can *not* be done."

Sir Humphrey mopped his brow

"You're sure?"



I saw, mistily, vaguely, the Countess standing tall above me. By her side was a sharp-faced little dwarf of a man. I could not move—had no will to move.

"Quite sure!"

The big man stared at him.

"Thank God!" he ejaculated. "But how do you account for my instinctive conviction that I *did* do it?"

Q. Q. smiled.

"It is quite easy under hypnosis to make a man wake up with the belief that he has committed a murder—especially if you arrange the circumstantial evidence convincingly. May I use your telephone?"

"Yes—yes—of course." Sir Humphrey was still bewildered. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to get your friends round here. Very clever people"—Q. Q. smiled again as he picked up the telephone—"but I think they'll find this is a case of diamond cut diamond. Hallo! Are you there?" He gave a number, waited. "Hallo! Is that Sebright? Oh, Sebright, a murder was committed last night at Sir Humphrey Maule's flat—yes, St. James's—I'll give you the details presently. Yes—I want you to come round—but on your way I want you to call at No. 504, Mount Street and bring along a couple of Russian people, Count Murovieff and his daughter, the Countess Stravinsky. Listen—and I'll explain. These two people were guests of Sir Humphrey Maule last night. They left soon after eleven. The murder was committed after that hour. Precisely. They have an alibi. Now, I want you to explain to them that their presence is necessary to verify whether the room is or is not as they left it at eleven. You can tell them, if you like, that the murderer is known. I think you'll have no difficulty in persuading them to come along—they cannot refuse their assistance in elucidating the circumstances of the crime. But it is most important that they should accompany you—and, by the way, don't mention my name. Good. You'll find me in Sir Humphrey's flat expecting you."

He hung up the receiver, turned to us with a smile. "Now we'll soon clear up all this little business."

SIR HUMPHREY had been pacing up and down the room. He swung round to Q. Q.

"I'm still bewildered, Quayne. What really happened in this room last night?"

Q. Q. smiled at him.

"You've heard of dhatura, Maule?"

"Of course I have. Favourite drug of the Indian criminal. Seeds rather like capsicum. Usually administered chopped up. Leaves no trace in the human body. Sends the victim into insensibility, and if he doesn't die he wakes up minus his memory—can't remember a thing about it."

"Precisely. Your two pseudo-Russian friends are, however, a little more refined in their methods than the ordinary Indian criminal. They didn't want the police to find you and Loftus lying dead here, and they themselves naturally under suspicion. They wanted Loftus dead and you self-accused of the murder. So they put into your whiskies-and-sodas a little—not crude dhatura, but a scientific preparation of the drug which is considerably more subtle in its effects—it leaves the victim extremely susceptible to hypnotic influence at the same time that it embroils his memory and paralyses him into a semi-insensible immobility. A drop or two would suffice, and it would take about ten minutes to have its effect. They did this just before they left. You accompanied them downstairs. On the way they picked your pocket of your keys. You came back, found the door shut, and—you remember—it was some little time before you could get Loftus to open it. The drug was already working in him, of course. You thought that both he and you had had a little too much to drink. You both went back into the sitting-room—not very steadily, I expect—and sat down. *You were both sitting there quite helpless*, when at a time convenient to your departed friends—perhaps two hours later, when everybody in the place had gone to bed—they returned, let themselves in at the outer door, and then this door with your keys, and found you nicely ready for them."

"Good God!" exclaimed Sir Humphrey. "And then——?"

"And then they hunted for your revolver, found it, shot Loftus as he sat paralysed in his chair, put the revolver on the floor after smearing your finger with the burnt powder which had escaped from its not very closely-fitting barrel, put the keys back in your pocket, and gave you a detailed hypnotic suggestion that you had done the whole business yourself, that you would sleep till the morning, and wake up with such a full conviction of your guilt that you would surrender yourself to the police. Very neat, I think."

"*Phew!*" Sir Humphrey whistled. He was still only half-convinced, however, and showed it. "All this is damned difficult to prove in a court of law, Quayne. What do you propose to do when you get these people here?"

Q. Q. smiled again.

"I told you this was a case of diamond cut diamond. You'll see. They should be here in a minute or two now."

We sat and waited, we three—and that sheeted something in the armchair, which, in my state of broken nerve, I was grateful not to see uncovered. The minutes dragged.

The ringing of the door-bell—when it came—was almost a relief.

"You go, Maule," said Q. Q.

Sir Humphrey went to open to the new arrivals. Q. Q. turned to the chair by the table, carefully withdrew that shapelessly humped covering, revealed a good-looking man crumpled in the seat, his head forward on his chest, dried blood plastered on his face from a wound in the temple. I gripped myself in a sudden sickening, sat short-breathed in suspense.

The next moment Sir Humphrey was again at the door, speaking to those who followed him.

"In here," he said. He made way politely for the lady.

She entered. I can't describe what sprang up in me at the sight once more of that quiet, Madonna-like beauty. Behind her was the little, intellectual-faced, white-headed dwarf of a man. And behind him was Sebright.

She took a step or two into the room, saw the corpse in the chair, and then her eyes switched to Q. Q. standing impassively close to it—from Q. Q. to me, fascinated where I sat. She must have recognized him as she recognized me—recognized also, in a flash, that her plan had failed. Q. Q. was still alive—grimly smiling.

She swayed, went deathly pale, jerked out her hand for support at the table.

The little white-haired old man sprang forward, caught her in his arms.

"Poor lady! Too much of a shock to her seeing that in the chair, Quayne," said Sebright, with reproof in his voice.

But Q. Q. ignored him. He also had sprung forward, caught at the lady, seemed to be mixed up in almost a struggle with the little man as he took her into his own stronger arms.

"All right," he said. "Let me have her. She'll be all right in a minute. Brandy, Maule."

He deposited her carefully in an armchair, turned to take the brandy-decanter Sir Humphrey held out to him.

"A glass?" Q. Q.'s eyes ranged round the room. "Ah, there's one!" He went across to a side-table, poured out a stiff peg of brandy, took it back to the woman. She waved it away. "I insist!" he said, firmly but not unkindly, held it to her mouth, poured some, whether she willed or no, down her throat. She gasped and choked with it.

Sir Humphrey was explaining to Sebright what he knew of the crime.

"I woke up at seven o'clock this morning in this room to—to see that!" he said, gesturing to the corpse in the chair.

"Good God!" exclaimed Sebright. "*Loftus!* But who could have done it?"

"I did!"

I jumped with the surprise of it. It was Sir Humphrey who had spoken—automatically—with full conviction.

Sebright also had jumped.

"*You?*" he cried. "*You*, Sir Humphrey?"

Sir Humphrey stood confused.

"I—I really don't know why I said that!" he stammered. "It—it was like something saying it for me."

Sebright gave him a glance of keen suspicion. Q. Q. interposed.

"All right, Sebright. He didn't mean it. He didn't do it. You'll understand presently."

Sebright looked altogether unconvinced. He turned to the little white-haired man.

"You left Sir Humphrey alone with Mr. Loftus last night, I understand, Count?" he said, professionally sharp-voiced.

"Yes. At five minutes past eleven. Sir Humphrey accompanied us to the street, put us in a taxi. Is not that so, Sir Humphrey?" The little old man was suave, pleasantly soft in his tones—a little nervous, however, for he took a white silk handkerchief from his pocket, wiped his mouth in a finically dandified gesture.

"Yes," said Sir Humphrey. I saw the sweat pearling on his forehead. "Yes—that's quite right."

"No one else was in the flat, apparently," continued Sebright, severely. "Your position requires a considerable amount of explanation, Sir Humphrey."

Sir Humphrey stammered.

"I—I——" He looked helplessly towards Q. Q.

AT that moment I uttered a startled cry. A peculiar expression had come over the face of the beautiful woman in the chair. She leaned back limply, stared in front of her with eyes that one guessed saw nothing—seemed as if in a trance.

The little white-haired old man jumped forward again. Q. Q. restrained him.

"All right, Count. Please do not interfere. This is a most fortunate little accident, I think." He smiled pleasantly as he quietly pushed the little old man back. "I had an intuition from the moment I saw your daughter that she was clairvoyant. As you see, she has gone into a trance—quite harmless—overcome perhaps by the sinister influences with which this room must still be soaked. Let us avail ourselves of it—in the interests of justice." He smiled again. "Your daughter will perhaps be able to show us precisely what happened in this room last night."

A frightened look had come into the little old man's eyes.

"I—I protest!" he said, sharply, making an effort to assert a personal dignity. "I protest against your trying possibly dangerous and certainly quite illegal experiments with my daughter!"

Q. Q. smiled at him.

"I am afraid, with all due apology, that I must ignore your protests, Count. A murder was committed in this room last night by very clever and quite unscrupulous people. We cannot afford a too scrupulous legality in dealing with them. A case of diamond cut diamond, in fact." He smiled again, turned to Sebright. His manner suddenly changed. "Will you please see that this man does not interfere, Sebright? I give him formally into your charge as Dr. Hugo Weidmann, against whom there is a warrant as accessory to the murder of Henry Paulin, Mr. Loftus's chief assistant, in January, 1917."

"It's false!" screamed the little man.

"It is true," replied Q. Q., imperturbably. "Quick, Sebright! Hold him—before he tries any tricks!—and gag him if he begins to utter a word!"

Sebright, after one quick stare of amazement, leaped to the emergency. In a moment he was by the side of the white-faced little old man, held him fast.

"And now," continued Q. Q., with a grimly bland smile, "we will proceed with the experiment." He turned to Sir Humphrey. "Pull up the chair from which you found this morning you had fallen, Maule, into precisely the position of last night. Sit down in it and do not move. You were drugged, remember. Behave as if you were still drugged."

Sir Humphrey did as he was told, pulled up the chair, sat down in it, facing that dead body gruesomely motionless at the end of the table. His blanched countenance looked almost drugged, in fact, in the tension of the moment.

Q. Q. reverted to the lady. He lifted her hand. It lay limp in his.

"Fräulein Clara Weidmann!" he said, in a voice of quiet authority. "You will respond to my commands, and to my commands only! Look into my eyes!"

The woman sighed. She moved her head slightly, looked into Q. Q.'s eyes, remained looking into them without a blink.

Q. Q. went on:—

"You will hear my voice when I speak to you, and only when I speak to you. You will hear no one else. You will see no one in this room except Sir Humphrey Maule and Mr. Loftus. Any other individuals will make no impression whatever on your consciousness. It will seem to you that they are not present. Last night you and your father left these rooms soon after eleven o'clock. It will seem to you that you are back at that hour, that you are living over again whatever happened after it." He turned to Sebright. "You will note, Sebright, that I am giving the lady no specific suggestions of what *did* happen."

The little old man wriggled half-out of Sebright's grasp.

"Clara!" he cried, gaspingly. "Clara! Listen to my voice! Clara! *You will obey me—me only!*"

"Gag him, Sebright!" said Q. Q. Sebright clapped a big hand over the man's mouth.

The woman in the chair, however, seemed not to have heard his voice. She remained immobile.

"Now, then, Fräulein Weidmann—*stand up!*" Q. Q. spoke quietly, but authoritatively.

She stood up.

"You have said 'Good night' to Sir Humphrey and Mr. Loftus. Where are you?"

"In the taxi." She spoke in a far-away but distinct voice. "I cannot stand in it."

"Sit down, then." She sat on the arm of the chair. "Talk as you talked then."

"*Du hast die Schlüssel?*" The words came automatically, spontaneously, a look of eager cunning suddenly vivid in her beautiful face. "*Famos!*" She gabbled quick German I could not catch. "*Ja—ja. Zwei Stunden—ja—sicher!*"

"Two hours," said Q. Q. "Those two hours have now passed. It is a quarter-past one. Where are you now?"

"Here." She stood up, like one in a trance.

"How did you get here?"

"We let ourselves in with the keys we took from Sir Humphrey's pocket." She spoke like one who answers questions in her sleep.

"You are living through that experience again. It *is*, to your consciousness, a quarter-past one. Where did you stand when the clock marked that hour?"

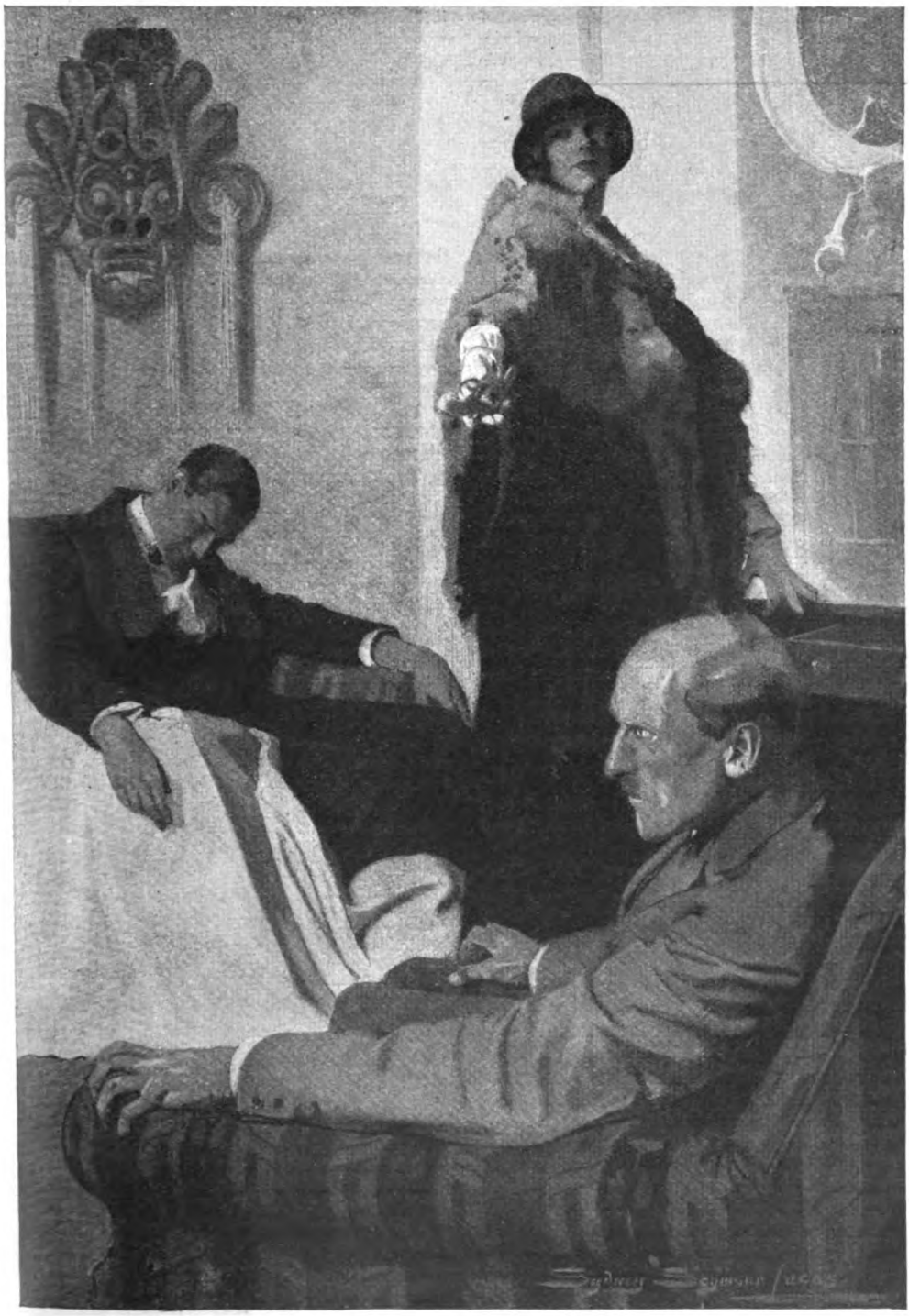
"We were just coming in the door."

Q. Q. led her—almost pathetically somnambulistic—to the door, released her.

"Behave just as you did then. It is real to you—the experience all over again."

ONCE more she came suddenly to an uncannily vivid life. She crept forward stealthily from the door, turned to glance over her shoulder as at someone following her, made a beckoning gesture. She whispered swift foreign words—I caught the German for "Yes—yes. Helpless—both of them. Quick!"

Q. Q. and I stood back with Sebright



In her hand was a revolver. She held it out to someone invisible.
"Here it is!" she said. "Quick! You do it!"

and his still silently struggling prisoner, left the centre of the room clear save for the two figures of Loftus and Sir Humphrey sitting motionless in their chairs. We watched her come across the room, as though watching a drama on the stage.

She went to the writing-desk, pulled open first one drawer and then another in a hurried search for something, uttered a little low cry of satisfaction, turned from it. In her hand was a revolver, Sir Humphrey's own revolver (Q. Q., I remembered, had carefully inquired after its normal resting place, put it back during the time we waited). She held it out to someone invisible.

"Here it is!" she said, in rapid, low-voiced German, her whole being keyed to a breathless tension. "Quick! You do it!"

She released her hold upon the weapon and it dropped upon the floor. But to her it must have seemed that that invisible person had taken it. She gave a little involuntary jump—uncannily dramatic in that silence—as though at a detonation.

"*Gott!*" she whispered, in German. "What a noise!" Then she sprang towards that collapsed figure of Loftus in his chair, peered at it closely, nodded her head quickly in reassurance. "*Tot!*"

She looked round, looked at Sir Humphrey, his eyes staring and breathing deeply as he sat in his chair. She went across to him, took up his hand, spoke in English.

"You hear me?" she said, sharply.

"Yes." Sir Humphrey gasped as he looked at her.

"Look into my eyes!"

He looked, kept staring at them for a minute or two of silence in which she fixed her gaze on his.

"When you wake up you will *know* that you killed your friend Loftus. I tell you how it happened. After putting us in the taxi, you came back here, went straight to your desk, took out your revolver, and shot him where he sat. You will not wake until seven o'clock. You will remember nothing about us except seeing our taxi go away down the street. But you will be so sure that you shot Loftus that you will give yourself up to the police to-morrow morning, and whenever the crime is mentioned you will accuse yourself. You understand?"

"Yes." Sir Humphrey's voice came from far away.

"Good God!" exclaimed Sebright.

Fascinated by the drama he was watching, he must for the moment have relaxed his grasp upon his prisoner. I saw the little man wriggle—and the next moment there was a deafening detonation, a faint film of smoke. The woman staggered, went headlong to the floor.

Q. Q. jumped to her, twisted her over, shook his head.

"Through the heart," he said.

I TURNED with him, to look at the little old man from whom, at that moment, Sebright was wrenching a small automatic pistol. Dr. Hugo Weidmann snarled at us.

"Better for her than your English law," he said. He relapsed suddenly into cool cynicism. "All right, Mr. Quayne. You've won. We did it. But before I go with this gentleman," he jerked his head towards Sebright, "I'd like to know—professionally—what spell you put on my daughter."

Q. Q. smiled at him.

"Simple, my dear sir. When we were both assisting her in her sudden and not unnatural faintness, I picked your pocket of the little phial I guessed you carried there for emergencies"—he held it up—"the stuff with which you drugged Loftus and Maule last night. And I gave her a good stiff dose of it in her brandy. As I have already remarked—diamond cut diamond, eh?" He ignored the little old man's savage curse, turned to Sir Humphrey, sitting there strangely stiff in his chair, shook him by the shoulder. "Wake up, Maule!" he said, jocularly. "Seven o'clock!"

Sir Humphrey stirred, looked about him, jumped up with a sudden horror on his features. His eyes met Sebright's.

"All right, Sir Humphrey," said Sebright. "We know now who killed poor Mr. Loftus."

Sir Humphrey stood like one dazed.

"Yes," he said. "God forgive me—I did—I know I did! Though I don't know why! Take me in charge!"

We all stared.

"Good Lord!" said Q. Q. "I believe she's hypnotized him again!"

Sebright looked not only bewildered but bad-tempered.

"All this," he grumbled, "is going to sound fantastic in a court of law, Quayne."

"Never mind, Inspector," said a gasping, croaking voice, "it won't come to a court of law." It was the little old man who spoke. His face was livid, dreadful, with foam at the corners of his mouth. "When I first came in—saw Quayne—I—I guessed—it was—hands up. Took—precautions——" he grinned horribly, "little glass capsule—held in mouth—too—too clever for you——" He wilted suddenly in Sebright's strong grasp—went down, lifeless, upon the floor when that grasp was released.

A Genuine Piece

by

CATHERINE and FRANK WELLS

ILLUSTRATED BY GRAHAM SIMMONS

Our readers will be interested to learn that the following story is by the wife and son of Mr. H. G. Wells.

THE Brethertons had recently taken a week-end cottage near Stansted Mountfitchet sizable enough to contain themselves and their two children and a governess. All that Spring Mrs. Bretherton had had such a craving for gardening and bulbs, such a longing for sitting on one's own grass plot, such an appreciation of what was cheap and rustic in furniture, such a disposition to talk about fowls at dinner-parties, and in general such a display of the instinct known to naturalists as nidification, that Mr. Bretherton, who thought her wonderful and clever and a wife to be quietly but almost burstingly proud of, gave in to the country cottage idea and stoically prepared to leave behind him every week-end the solid Sunday comforts of his home in Portman Square.

Every Saturday, then, Mrs. Bretherton had an early lunch, packed all sorts of frangible and spiky furnishings and crushable foodstuffs as inconspicuously as she could into the corners of their landaulette car, spread her rug over herself and as much as possible to temper the protrusion of parcels, and was driven by the careful Smithers into the City, where they picked up her husband for Hertfordshire. Smithers controlled the packing with a nicer sense of the space that it was advisable to leave for the reception of Mr. Bretherton than his wife ever thought of displaying. Mrs. Bretherton, when packing the car, visualized her husband without his motor-coat. But Mr. Bretherton wearing his motor-coat was worth two in the space dimension of any other man.

The last thing to be put into the car was Mr. Bretherton, for Mrs. Bretherton knew better about motoring and men than to attempt to stop the car and shop or pick up things after they had started. Once on the way, the most alluring shops, the most enticing wayside blossom, must be admired with abstraction. Mrs. Bretherton had never said a single word about something that lay very close to her heart, a sign that hung beside a wheelwright's shop at Potter Street, the long, straggling village lying between Epping and Harlow, though on six occasions had she read it with an appetite that grew with each reading. "Chimneys Swept," it said in shaky letters of white paint on a black board, and—and this was the bit that caught the breath—"Second-hand furniture bought and sold." No shop window. None of the usual common show of battered oak, pewter plate, Toby jug, and willow-pattern dish that marks the spoof antique to the experienced female eye; nothing but a hint of sheds behind the wheel-

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wright's shop and a flower-bed embellished with three dahlia plants tied each to the disarticulated leg of an old Windsor chair.

There was something about those disrupted legs that clinched the matter. Where an old, presumably wheelback chair is torn apart to provide stakes for dahlias there must be such a possibility of "picking up" as happens to few women in a lifetime. Mrs. Bretherton showed herself every inch worthy of the married happiness she enjoyed when she refrained each time she passed the place from betraying how tremendously she wanted to stop the car and explore those sheds. And on the seventh occasion she was whirled past that board, Providence showed itself worthy of the trust she had reposed in it. It had been arranged that old Mrs. Spooner, coming back from the White Stag near by, after popping up there for her "'levenses," should come over very queer and drop an empty glass bottle she happened to be carrying. Some of the pieces remained at the edge of the road, but only at the edge, so that it had further to be arranged that Mr. Paycock's young terrier pup should choose the moment when Mr. Bretherton's car was approaching to do his great catapult act out of the garden gate into the road and, if Smithers had not been such a very reliable man, end his young life. But the car swerved; and it was only a hundred yards farther on that it began to lump and bump more and more distressingly, until Smithers slowed down and brought it to a standstill.

"Puncture," said Mr. Bretherton gravely, marking the occasion as suitably as a clock striking the hour. He was not the man to get flustered over a thing like that. He was not one of those husbands who fly into a passion and say damn and worse over small disasters. Smithers could change the wheel and put on his spare so smoothly and efficiently and quickly that a puncture was only a special demonstration of the excellent working order of the minor machinery of Mr. Bretherton's life. One could get out and stretch one's legs.

"I'll walk back a little way," said Mrs. Bretherton. "I think I saw a shop——"

"Smithers won't be many minutes," warned Mr. Bretherton.

Mrs. Bretherton was already in rapid retrogression.

The wheelwright's shop abutted on the footpath, and bore above its doorway in faded white lettering the inscription *Enoch Struggles*. Mrs. Bretherton, her eyes bright and neck outstretched like an acquisitive jackdaw looking for spoons, walked up to the shop and looked in. There seemed to be no one there, but the place was so full of rusty iron hoops and spokes and scraps of cart that it was difficult to make sure. The walls, where they were exposed, were daubed with trial sploshes of green and red and blue paint. Mrs. Bretherton stared at this confusion and rapped on the open door, but there was no human animation among the hoops. She rapped louder.

Whereat a sash window was banged up somewhere above her head, and a shrill female voice called out sharply: "Now, none 'er that, young miss!"

Mrs. Bretherton was surprised, and stepped back out of the doorway. Alongside the shop and cottage was a straggling garden where the three dahlia plants stood braced to their several chair-legs like rolled umbrellas, and among other mixed vegetation were some currant bushes dangling bunches of red currants from which a small child in pink cotton was very earnestly walking away. A youngish woman with a sharp nose hung over the upper window-sill at the side of the house and watched this pink object make off. Mrs. Bretherton was relieved to find that she had been mistaken.

She advanced to the window. "Could you tell me——" she began in an arresting tone.

The youngish woman looked down, turned about with one hand uplifted to stay the descending sash, and called into the cottage: "Eee-Noch!"

This was getting on.

MRS. BRETHERTON waited. She waited nearly a minute, and then heard with relief heavy footsteps coming down wooden stairs. She stood expectant for another minute. And then another.

Time was passing. And Smithers was so quick.

Reconnoitring, she found the cottage had a door on the garden side. She rapped at it briskly. Another minute passed before it opened slowly and confronted her with a stout man in shirt-sleeves rolled up over black hairy arms. He had a red-cheeked, swarthy face under a mop of black hair in tight curls.

Before she could speak he waggled his head in slow denial, and pointed at her with a short briar pipe. "Can't take 'nuther job for a fortnit," he said. "Tissn no good askin' me."

"I don't want——" began Mrs. Bretherton.

Mr. Struggles shook his head steadily again, and went on talking loudly and without hurry in a way that was very difficult to arrest. "I'm very sorry, mum, but I can't do ut, whatever ut be. I got Mr. Triggs' 'arvester to get goin', and 'urdles here wanted and 'urdles there, and Mr. Toomer's lawn-mower to ree-pare. Sides

other jobs waitin'. I don't want to seem disobliging yer——"

"But I don't want anything repaired," shouted Mrs. Bretherton. "I thought you had some old furniture for sale——"

Mr. Struggles took this in with deliberation. "Wot furnicher?" he parried confusingly.

"Well!" said Mrs. Bretherton, and by an inspiration pointed at the board. "I saw that board."

"Oh, that!" said Mr. Struggles, in a tone of contempt.

"Perhaps you'd let me see what you have," said Mrs. Bretherton persuasively. Mr. Struggles, taking his time, came out of his front door and led the way up the path to the sheds. He stopped in mid-path and turned round and faced her.

"I got a good iron bedstead," he said sagely, in a confidential undertone, as a wise man might to a sensible woman. "*And* palliasses."

"I don't think I want——" hesitated Mrs. Bretherton.

"They're good, mind yer," said Mr. Struggles fiercely.

"I'm sure they are," replied Mrs. Bretherton hastily.

Mr. Struggles untwisted a screw of wire that held the latch of the larger shed. There flashed into Mrs. Bretherton's mind one of the innumerable pictures she had seen of Mr. Carter at the tomb of Tutankhamen. The door opened on creaking hinges, and the full demerits of the iron bedstead and palliasses were plainly displayed. Behind these honest objects was a thicket of deal Windsor chairs stained red, and a large liverish mahogany chest of drawers with scrolly embellishments. There were the loose frames of some garden hammock chairs, a battered sponge bath, and part of a seltzogene which to anyone who had the other part would have been invaluable. There was probably more, it was impossible to see. Mrs. Bretherton was very much disappointed. She stood peering into the mass, trying to discover a hint of antiquity.

Mr. Struggles seemed to await decisions. "Is this all?" she said, trying not to be too deprecatory.

With an air of giving way to an unreasonable woman, Mr. Struggles opened another shed. Some basket-chairs occupied the foreground, but sticking up over them out of the shadows was a curved leg—and Mrs. Bretherton knew. She says that the minute she saw that leg she *knew*.

Mr. Struggles began to lug out the sofa with crashings and rendings that went to Mrs. Bretherton's heart.

"It's difficult to see everything," she said, simulating unconcern according to her conception of the best collectors' manner. "What is that?" She pointed to the leg.

"Sofy," said Mr. Struggles, tersely.

"Could I see it?"

"Is it a sofy yer want?" countered Mr. Struggles.

"It might be useful," said Mrs. Bretherton, diplomatically.

"I got a better 'un than that in the 'ouse. That 'un ain't no good to a lady."

Mrs. Bretherton, unravelling the tangle inside the shed with a busy eye, could now follow the curved leg to a dark wood frame decorated with tarnished metal. Brass inlay! There was the hint of a curved end. Empire!

"If I might see that one better, I'd like to," said Mrs. Bretherton firmly. "Can I move these?" She seized a basket-chair.

Mr. Struggles, with a faint ill grace, flung himself upon the contents of the shed. He extracted basket-chairs with violence, and began to lug out the sofa with crashings and rendings that went to Mrs. Bretherton's heart,

appreciating as she did more and more the quality of her find. It stood free at last, half out of the shed, an Empire sofa of graceful shape that had seen better days, a strange bit of battered elegance out of high society come sadly down in the world and wearing a coarse covering of black horsehair. Mrs. Bretherton was secretly enraptured with it.

"It might do," she ventured, coldly. "But how much *is* it?" She tried to speak in a troubled kind of way, as if any sum almost were beyond her means.

Mr. Struggles looked at her warily and took in all the details of her prosperous appearance. "Two puns," he said, gambling enormously.

Mrs. Bretherton's heart leapt. But true to her class, the collecting class, she looked dubious and said coldly: "Oh, as much as that!"

Mr. Struggles gave the sofa a hearty push and began to pile back the basket-chairs. Mrs. Bretherton had no time for the finer shades of her craft.

"I'll take it," she said promptly, and confirmed Mr. Struggles in his opinion of himself as an astute man of the world.

SHE paid. The conveyance of the sofa to Stansted Mountfitchet raised an unforeseen difficulty. Carrier? There was no carrier. Railway, then. But Mr. Struggles announced that the railway would not take furniture uncased. Then how about a packing-case?

Mr. Struggles was almost bereft of speech at the ignorance of this woman. "Thattud cost yer more'n the sofy," he said, derisively.

Mrs. Bretherton was getting worried. The thing had to be settled somehow. "Then what am I to do?" she appealed.

Mr. Struggles thought. 'Ow'd yer come 'ere?" he inquired.

"I am motoring."

"Can't yer take it with yer?"

A startling proposal, but just possible. The landaulette car had an ample, massive top, the hood at the back was down, and she visualized the sofa in its light elegance, had she been an autonomous woman, firmly tied across the extended front. But what would Mr. Bretherton say?

"Yer'd best take it with yer," said Mr. Struggles, conclusively.

Mrs. Bretherton's mind had reached that point of fatigue when it turned hopefully to her man's affection and support. "I suppose we might," she said; "I'll consult my husband," and turned away from Mr. Struggles and went off briskly.

Mr. Bretherton was on the road, coming to meet her. "All aboard, Pussums," he called out cheerfully.

At once the project of tying an old sofa to the top of the car showed itself for the foolish piece of feminine optimism that it was. Mrs. Bretherton took another line. "I've found the most wonderful treasure, darling," she cried, beamingly.

"What's that?" smiled Mr. Bretherton back at her.

"In a blacksmith's shop just here. The loveliest old Empire sofa."

"Well, well, well," said Mr. Bretherton, as one might say, "We won't stop and pick those flowers now," and tucked his hand in its enormous gauntletted leather glove into the crook of her arm, and impelled her to the car.

"But I've bought it!"

"You have, have you? What's the damage?"

"You'd never guess if you saw it. I got it for forty shillings!"

Translation of pounds into shillings lowered prices tremendously to Mrs. Bretherton.

Mr. Bretherton looked as if he thought things might have been worse. "Get along with you, Pussums," he said, indulgently, pushing her to the waiting car.

"But, Tom, do advise me. They can't send it."

They were both standing by the car now, Mr. Bretherton facing the way she had come. "What on earth's this?" he began loudly, staring over her shoulder.

Mrs. Bretherton turned about. Mr. Struggles, either under a misapprehension or to get rid of trouble, was advancing resolutely towards them, holding the sofa planted across his back. A strong man, Mr. Struggles.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Bretherton, helplessly.

"What's he up to, Mother?" said Mr. Bretherton, sternly.

When he called her Mother, things were getting serious. When he was really annoyed he called her Clare. It speaks more than volumes, it speaks a whole British Museum Library for his deep affection for her that not once during that trying afternoon is it on record that he called her Clare.

"It's a mistake," cried Mrs. Bretherton. Mr. Struggles continued his fateful advance.

"What's he think he's doing?"

"It's all a mistake. He didn't know how to send it to Stansted. I came to ask you. He's got a *silly* idea we could take it with us."

"Take it how?"

"On the *car*," said Mrs. Bretherton, in a small voice.

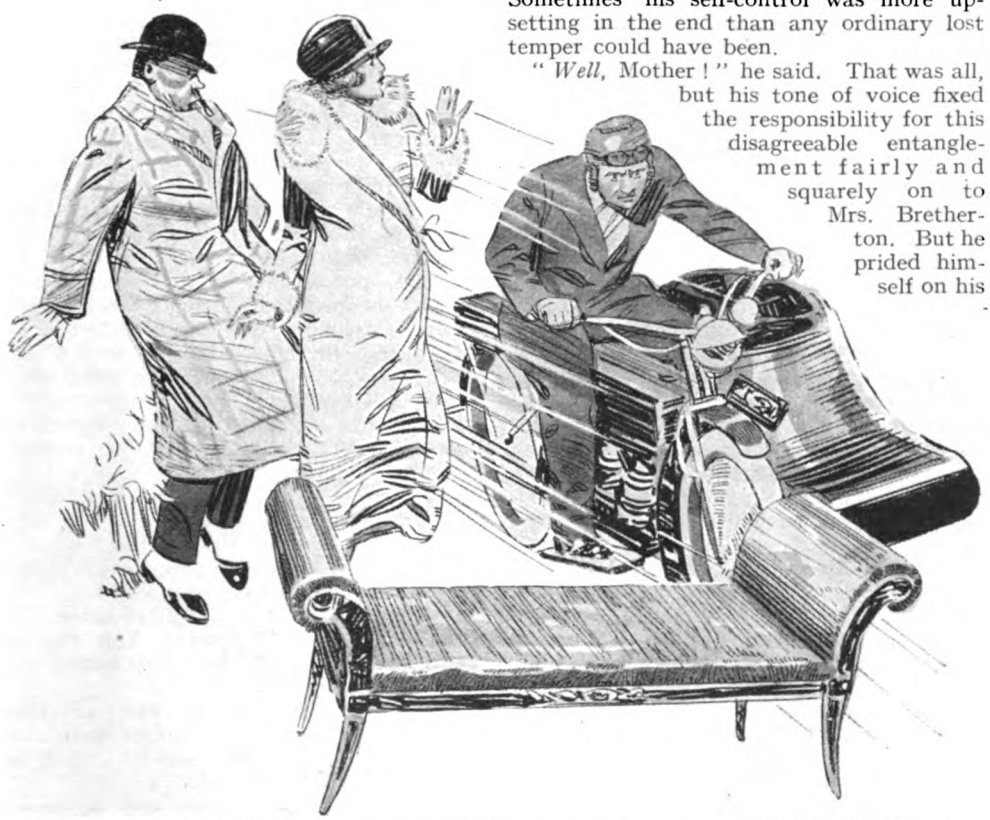
"Good Lord!"

"Of course we can't," said Mrs. Bretherton.

Mr. Bretherton strode past her. "Hi, there, my man," he called out. "Just stop there, would you?"

Oh, dear! Mrs. Bretherton knew by this time that that was not the way to succeed with Mr. Struggles. Mr. Struggles had stopped, slidden one end of his burden to the ground, and now remained supporting the other in the air.

There was a brief conversation. Mrs. Bretherton could not hear what was being said, but from his gestures it looked as though Mr. Struggles had already taken umbrage. "'Tain't my property now," he said, raising his voice suddenly. "If yer'd spoke me civil, p'r'aps I would 'uv, but yer didn't," and he dropped the other end of the sofa down on the road and turned and marched off home.



A motor-cyclist with a side-car came rushing out of the unseen and had the shave of his life past the sofa.

Mr. Bretherton remained in the middle of a quiet country road that was straddled by a drawing-room sofa. Mrs. Bretherton stood by the car feeling unhappy. Smithers was invisible.

Before anything else could happen a motor-cyclist with a side-car came rushing out of the unseen beyond the Brethertons' car, swished past Mrs. Bretherton, and had the shave of his life past the sofa.

Mrs. Bretherton started forward. "Oh, let's *move* it," she cried.

She came and lugged at one end; Mr. Bretherton, after a momentary disinclination, pulled at the other, and they got it off the crown of the road. It rested picturesquely with its back against meadowsweet and dog roses. Mrs. Bretherton was getting frightened about it, but she still adored it.

She looked at her husband. Mr. Bretherton was calm in a tight sort of way that she knew was dangerous. It was his self-control. Sometimes his self-control was more upsetting in the end than any ordinary lost temper could have been.

"*Well*, Mother!" he said. That was all, but his tone of voice fixed the responsibility for this disagreeable entanglement fairly and squarely on to Mrs. Bretherton. But he prided himself on his self-control. With his self-control at full pressure, he went off now to speak to Smithers.

Smithers, having received his instructions, came round the car with his face registering, as the movie people say, curiosity and interest. It then, as Mrs. Bretherton came into view sitting on the sofa, registered astonishment. And as its owner got nearer and realized that this was the object that Mr. Bretherton had directed him to carry to the car and put on

the roof, it registered a fading inclination for the whole business. However——

Mrs. Bretherton rising to her feet, Smithers took hold of the sofa. It was not heavy, being one of those charming Récamier things that have no back; but its weight being mainly at the ends, and being light in the middle, it was difficult to balance. Smithers grasped it round the waist and swung it up, and the heavier end came down again with a bump on the ground. Smithers se zed it again, and Mrs. Bretherton said to a lifeless village: "Let us get someone to help." Smithers with one stop for readjustment carried it to the car, where Mr. Bretherton stood prepared to lend a hand in mounting it to the roof. There was a brief difficulty. As between employer and employed, was it more correct that Smithers should climb up on to the roof and pull it up while Mr. Bretherton heaved it from below, or should these positions be reversed? Manifestly Mr. Bretherton could not as employer clamber on to the roof. The matter settled itself very properly by Smithers heaving the sofa up the side of the car, leaving it there with Mr. Bretherton as its dignified and passive support, and getting up on the roof and pulling. During this operation Mr. Bretherton became increasingly concerned about incidental rubbings and scratchings of his car, and Smithers, under the heat and wear and tear, increasingly negligent of that aspect. And all the time Mr. Bretherton had to keep up his self-control, and all the time Mrs. Bretherton held herself tight and whispered to comfort herself, "Once it's *up*——"

AT last it really was up, and Smithers had only barked his thumb, and Mr. Bretherton had only had a little wholesome exercise. And there it was, safe on the car. Such a charming old thing! What was there to make a fuss about, really? Mr. Bretherton had declared that it stuck out too much sideways, placed across the car, and so to please him it was turned round lengthways, and one end made a kind of roof over the heads of Mr. and Mrs. Bretherton when they were seated. Mrs. Bretherton felt that if her companion had been another woman, she could have said "What *fun!*" as they settled into the car again, and there would have been happy laughter; but as things were, such a remark might have been a lighted match to the gunpowder of Mr. Bretherton's self-control. Men were so odd, she reflected—not for the first time. Strange how much of the jollier side of life they seemed to miss. Convents, it is well known, resound to peals of merriment. . . .

Smithers, being of the lower classes and having less self-control, started his engine and let in the clutch with a jerk. The car jumped forward, the sofa heaved, lurched violently backward, and plunged at Mr. Bretherton as if trying to save itself. It was only the stout construction of his bowler hat that saved him. The sofa glanced off, made a frenzied effort to come to rest on the pile of parcels that was thwarted by the rapidly-increasing pace of the car, leant dangerously to the back of the car, imitated a see-saw for awhile on the folded hood, and then flung up its heels and disappeared. All this, as the novelists say, was the work of a moment.

It was only a long while afterwards that Mrs. Bretherton, telling the story to a female friend, could gasp between outbursts of laughter: "And we *couldn't stop* SMITHERS!"

Smithers, to end the undignified position in which his car was placed as soon as possible, was heading for home full tilt. Mr. Bretherton hammered on the glass. It was difficult to induce Smithers to pull up. And even then Mr. Bretherton very beautifully did not blame his wife.

"If I ever see that infernal ass of a man again," he shouted, banging his crushed bowler into shape, "I'll poke his silly face in. Of all the silly infernal idiots and blackguards——" And so on. His self-control was badly bent.

The explosion ended at last. Smithers, at a standstill, showed that he awaited orders.

"Go on," called out Mr. Bretherton, waving towards Stansted.

"*Leave* it?" cried Mrs. Bretherton.

"YES. What do you suppose I'm going to do? We might have been killed."

"But it is such a beautiful thing. A genuine piece of Empire. You can't—throw it away——" Mrs. Bretherton was almost in tears.

"It can't be looking like anything genuine now except a genuine bunch of firewood. Go on, Smithers!" And he signalled through the window.

Smithers looked pleased and addressed himself again to his engine. But before he could get going a red-faced policeman, riding a green bicycle and shouting something, went by. He dismounted and returned.

"*You* dropped something on the road, sir?" he said accusingly to Mr. Bretherton.

Mr. Bretherton had to admit his property. He knew when he saw the perspiring face and implacable eye of the law that the dream of driving on a free and happy man had to be given up, and with whatever grace he could muster he was obliged to instruct Smithers to go back. Smithers, mustering even less grace, assuaged his

feelings by dexterously driving backwards the whole way instead of engaging in the tedium of turning the car.

The sofa, temporarily at peace, lay prone in the middle of the road. One graceful leg had been knocked off in its fall; nails protruded from the wound. Smithers of course could not see this; he was hardly to be blamed for the sound idea of backing up as close as possible to the sofa before he started to get it on the car again. Too close; a back tyre rolled up gently against the nails, enveloped the nails, and let out a sudden fierce hiss. There was no second spare wheel.

Mrs. Bretherton, still going on with the story to that friend, would say here; "Sometimes *everything* seems to go wrong." She never laughed at this part, the thing was too grim. Mr. Bretherton was so terribly calm that Mrs. Bretherton was frightened. They all got out of the car. In silence Smithers pulled the sofa away from the car, propped it up on its three legs on the strip of grass between the road and the ditch, and prepared for the task of mending his puncture.

It was curious that the village of Potter Street, which had previously been so disobligingly inanimate, should now begin to exude human beings slowly from every side as a squeezed orange exudes pips. Three small children with a marked resemblance to Mr. Enoch Struggles, and presently two more, came on to the scene in a leisurely manner and stopped and stared. A number of men abandoned some less urgent occupation of an agricultural nature on the other side of the hedge and came and stared. The policeman returned on his bicycle, dismounted, propped it against the gate, and came into the road again with a watching brief for law and order. He was not going to have a foundling sofa left on his hands at the end of the day.

But neither would he take an unhelpful attitude. "You got a puncture there, sir," he warned Mr. Bretherton, pointing.

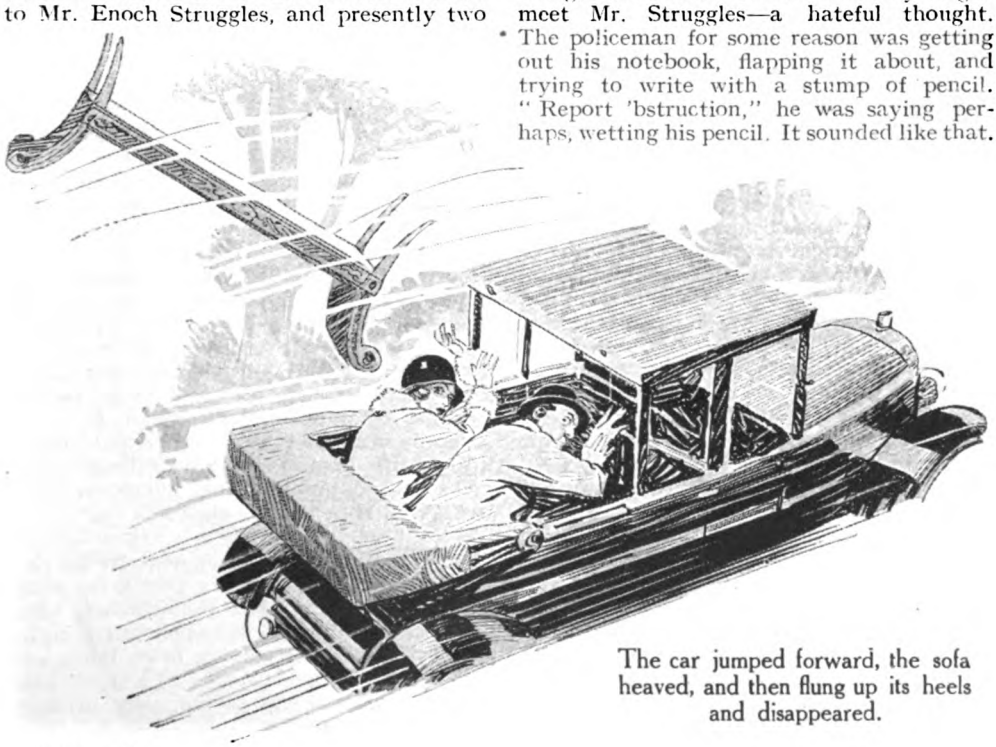
Mr. Bretherton, with perfect self-command, replied that he knew.

Smithers was routing in his tool-box. The policeman went nearer to the tyre and examined it carefully, bending down and pinching it and then standing erect and regarding it. "Must 'ave been done by a nail or somethin'," he told Mr. Bretherton.

"Punctured it is," said one of the men from the gate, gravely.

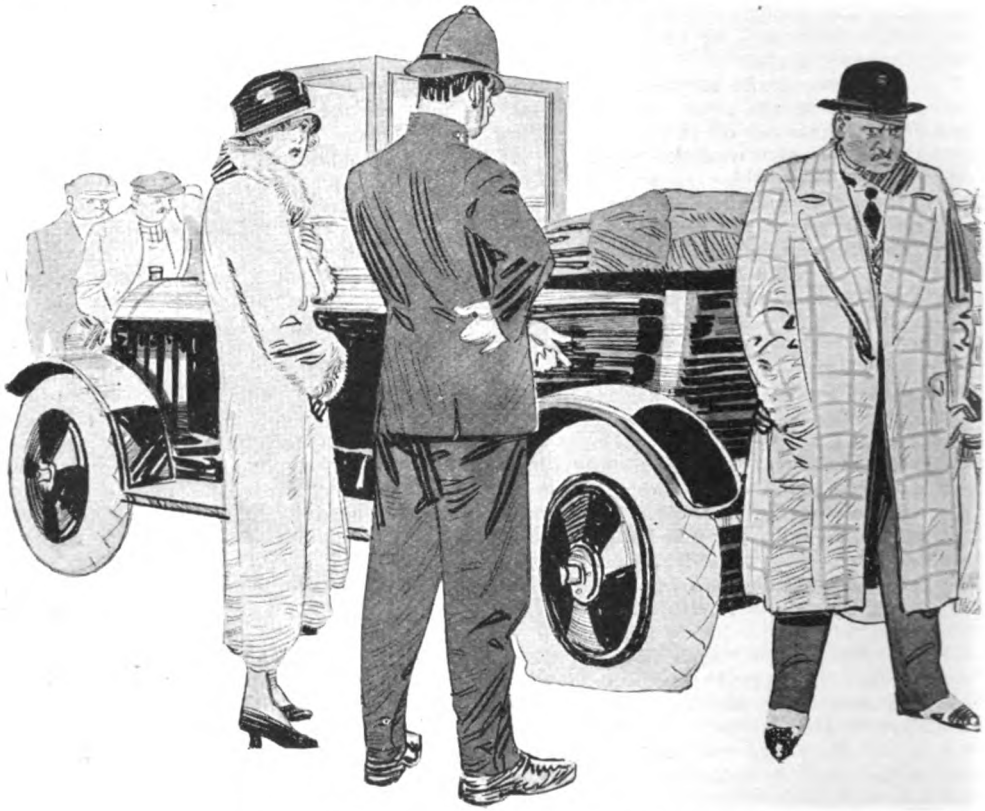
Mr. Bretherton, goaded by self-control, looked round for a refuge in vain. There ought to have been a comfortable white-fronted hotel in sight, with geraniums in its window-boxes, where they could have sheltered with dignity and had tea. There wasn't. What good were these Motorists' Associations? If they went back into the village and looked for an inn they might meet Mr. Struggles—a hateful thought.

The policeman for some reason was getting out his notebook, flapping it about, and trying to write with a stump of pencil. "Report 'bstruction," he was saying perhaps, wetting his pencil. It sounded like that.



The car jumped forward, the sofa heaved, and then flung up its heels and disappeared.

A Genuine Piece



The policeman returned with a watching brief for law and order. He would he take an unhelpful attitude. "You got a

As it was uncomfortable to write in the air he stepped back and seated himself ponderously on the sofa. On the one-legged end.

Everything became very confused. Policeman and sofa went over backwards into the ditch in a mixed tangle of arms and legs. There was a guffaw from the gate and a squeak of laughter from Mrs. Bretherton. The policeman and the sofa seemed to be struggling together in the ditch, the sofa's legs were waving, and then the policeman had grasped a leg and there was a sharp crack. The hapless sofa had become a biped.

A loud clattering along the road announced the coming of a big lorry.

Mr. Bretherton started into action. He spread his arms before the advancing lorry and stopped it.

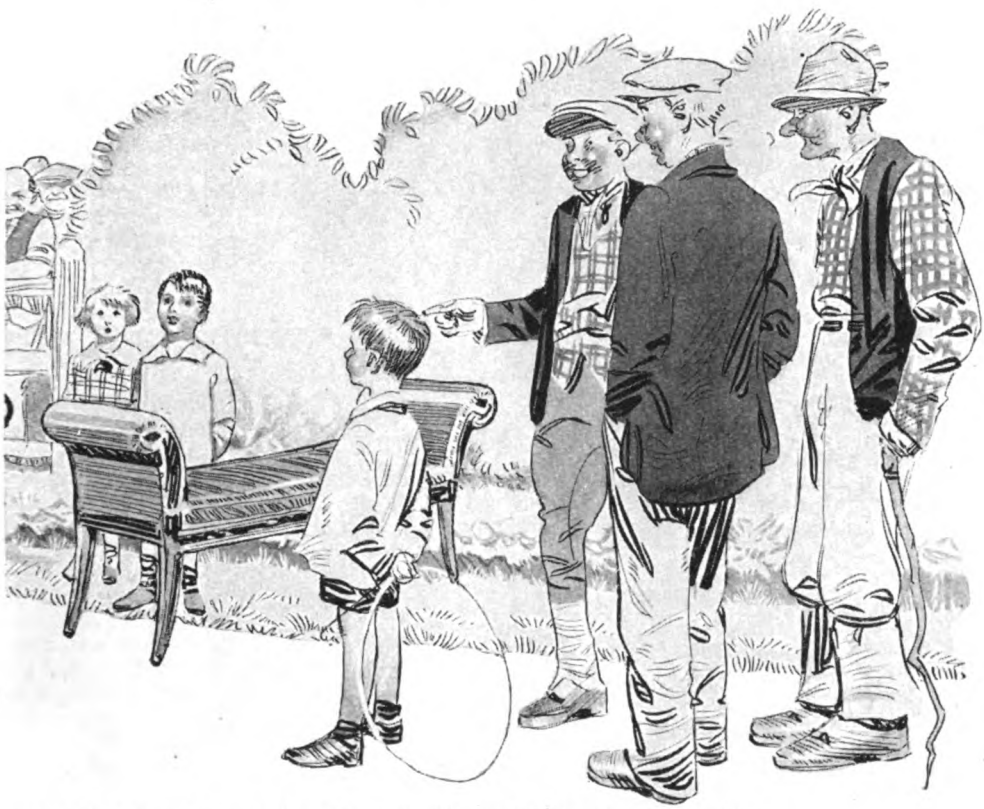
It turned out to be empty, and the driver was willing to strike a bargain. The price asked seemed enormous, but Mr. Bretherton was in no condition to argue. The sofa was slung in and Mr. Bretherton prepared to assist his wife to mount.

"What *luck!*" said Mrs. Bretherton, clutching two sofa legs and clambering up.

Her remark gave Mr. Bretherton no pleasure. He did not think of the lorry as luck, he thought of it only as another scurvy trick of Providence to deprive him of his rightful dignities. Mrs. Bretherton sat very comfortably on the sofa, which had its limbless end supported by an empty packing-case, but Mr. Bretherton would make no compromise with his enemy and would not sit beside her. He preferred to sit on the bony seat beside the driver.

There remained behind the policeman, still busily breathing, and Smithers going on with the repair of his puncture. The audience began to melt away.

MRS. BRETHERTON was giving tea to a visitor in her pretty drawing-room at Stansted Mountfitchet. She was seated on a glossily-polished Empire sofa decorated with shining brass inlay and upholstered in golden silk. "I'm so glad you like it," she was saying, very brightly and complacently.



was not going to have a foundling sofa left on his hands. But neither puncture there, sir," he warned Mr. Bretherton.

" Of course, the moment I came into the room I noticed it at once. It's lovely. Where did you discover it ? "

" It was rather a find—in a dusty old shed behind a wheelwright's shop on the other side of Harlow. It was hidden away behind masses of rubbish, but directly I saw a bit of it sticking out I *knew*. Of course, it wanted cleaning up."

" You are a clever thing, Clare. Isn't she, Mr. Bretherton ? Heaps of people would never have picked it out."

" Oh, it was just luck, that's all."

" Of course, motoring, one has such chances. What fun it is picking up treasures, isn't it ? "

" And I only paid for it—guess ! "

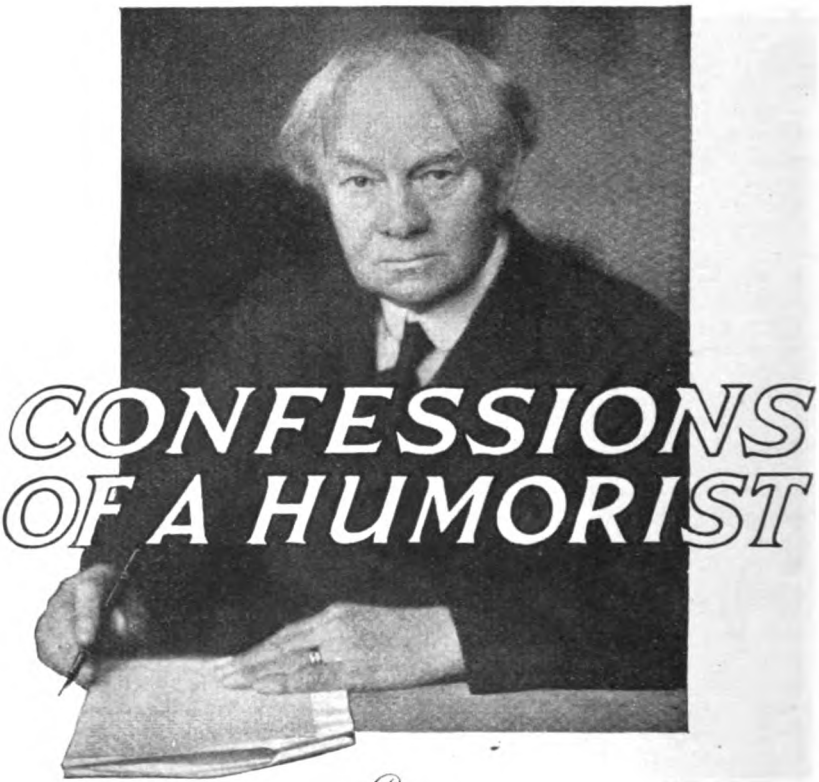
" I can't."

" Two pounds."

" My dear Clare ! I'm *green* with envy."

Mr. Bretherton walked over to the French window and looked out on the garden and pondered. He had never been a very good mathematician, and he was trying to add. The cost of the lorry, the unloading at Harlow, the train fares, the carriage on the sofa, difficulties with a trap at Stansted, a new tyre for the car, Smithers to be comforted, repairs to the sofa, an expensive silk cover—it was too complicated without a pencil and paper.

" Of course, it isn't really in the same style," he heard his wife saying ; rather loudly, he thought, for him to hear. " But the room does want re-papering, and when we've had that done it will look quite at home."



CONFESSIONS OF A HUMORIST

By

JEROME K. JEROME

I.—LITERARY BEGINNINGS.

MY first book! He stands before me, bound in paper wrapper of a faint pink colour, as though blushing all over for his sins. "On the Stage—and Off. By Jerome K. Jerome" (the K. very large, followed by a small j; so that by many the name of the author was taken to be Jerome Kjerome—a name that in certain smoke-laden circles still clings to me). "The Brief Career of a would-be Actor. One shilling nett. Ye Leadenhall Press. London. 1885."

He was born in Whitfield Street, Tottenham Court Road, in a second-floor back overlooking a burial ground. The house is now a part of Whitefield's Tabernacle. A former tenant of the room—some young clerk like myself, I guessed him to be—had been in love with a girl named Annie. The bed was in a corner, and, lying there, he had covered the soot-grimed wallpaper with poetry to her—of sorts. It meandered in and out among Chinese temples, willow trees, and warriors. One verse I remember ran:—

> *"Oh, Annie fair, beyond compare,*
> *To speak my love I do not dare.*
> *Oh cruel Fate that shakes her head,*
> *And tells me I'm too poor to wed."*

Being directly opposite the pillow, it greeted me each morning when I opened my eyes. It was applicable to my own case also, and had a depressing effect upon me.

I had tried short stories, essays, satires. One—but one only—a sad thing about a maiden who had given her life for love and been turned into a waterfall, and over the writing of which I had nearly broken

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my heart, had been accepted by a paper called *The Lamp*. It died soon afterwards. The others, with appalling monotony, had been returned to me again and again; sometimes with the editor's compliments and thanks, and sometimes without; sometimes returned with indecent haste, seemingly by the next post; sometimes kept for months—in a dustbin, judging from appearances. My heart would turn to lead whenever the dismal little slavey would knock at the door and enter with them. If she smiled as she handed me the packet, her thumb and finger covered with her apron so as not to soil it, I fancied she was jeering at me. If she looked sad, as more often she did, poor little overworked slut, I thought she was pitying me. I shunned the postman when I saw him in the street, feeling sure he knew my shame. I wonder if the smart journalists who make fun, in the comic papers, of the rejected contributor have ever been themselves through that torture-chamber?

By luck, my favourite poet just then was Longfellow. It has become the fashion to belittle him. Perhaps all his verse does not reach the level of, say, "The Building of the Ship." But even Wordsworth nods. To youth, face to face with giants, Longfellow will long remain a helpful voice. Some two years before, on a sudden impulse, I had written him a long rigmarole of a letter, pouring out my troubles to him; addressing it simply to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, America; and had received an answer proving to me that he understood my case exactly and knew all about me. Always when things were at their worst, or nearly so, I would go to him for comfort; and one evening, crouching over my small fire, I struck the poem beginning:—

"By his evening fire the artist
Pondered o'er his secret shame."

I had the feeling that Longfellow must have been thinking about me. And when I read the last two lines:—

"That is best which lieth nearest;
Shape from that thy work of art,"

it came to me that Longfellow was telling me not to bother about other people's troubles—those of imaginary maidens turned into waterfalls, and such like—but to write about my own. I would tell the world the story of a hero called Jerome who had run away and gone upon the stage; and of all the strange and moving things that had happened to him there. I started on it that same evening, and in three months it was finished. I hunted up an old actor named Johnson—the oldest actor on the boards, he boasted himself; and he certainly looked it. He had played with Edmund Kean, Macready, Phelps, and Booth, not to mention myself. We had been at Astley's together, during the run of "Mazeppa." It had fallen to our lot, in the third act, to unbind Liza Weber from the exhausted steed and carry her across the stage. I took her head and old Johnson her heels. She was what Mr. Mantalini would have called a demmed fine woman, weighing, I should think, some fourteen stone; and during the journey she would pour out blood-curdling threats as to what she would do to both or either of us if we dropped her. Old Johnson lost his temper one night.

My heart would turn to lead whenever the dismal little slavey would knock at the door and enter with the packets.

"Oh, come on, young 'un," he called out to me in a loud whisper, "let's chuck her into the orchestra." He began to heave his end. She kept quiet after that. He was now with Wilson Barrett at the old Princess's. I used to wait for him at the stage door, and we would adjourn to a little tavern in Oxford Market. It really was a market in those days, with wooden booths all round and stalls in the centre where now stand Oxford Mansions. He would look over my MS. to see that I had made no blunders; and the anecdotes and stories that he told me would have made a rattling good book of themselves. I meant to write it. But he died before we had completed it.

FOR a workroom, I often preferred the quiet streets to my dismal bed-sitting room. Portland Place was my favourite study. I liked its spacious dignity. With my note-book and a pencil in my hand, I would pause beneath each lamp-post and jot down the sentence I had just thought out. At first the police were suspicious. I had to explain to them; and later they got friendly; and often I would read to them some passage I thought interesting or amusing. There was an officer—a dry old Scotsman who always reached Langham Church as the clock struck eleven; he was the most difficult. Whenever I made him laugh, I went home feeling I had done good work.

When finished, it went the round of many magazines. I think I sent it first to *The Argosy*, edited by Mrs. Henry Wood. But the real editor was a little fat gentleman named Peters. He ran also *The Girl's Own Paper*, for which he wrote a weekly letter signed "Aunt Fanny," giving quite good advice upon love, marriage, the complexion and how to preserve it, how to dress as a lady on fifteen pounds a year—all such-like things useful for girls to know. A kindly old bachelor. I came to know him. He lived in a dear little cottage in Surrey and was a connoisseur of port wine. George Augustus Sala, then editing *Temple Bar*, next had a chance of securing it. He wrote me that, himself, he liked it, but feared it was not quite the thing for family reading. Sala, also, was a connoisseur of port wine. He had a nose about which, like Cyrano de Bergerac, he was touchy. He brought a libel action once against a man who had made some chaffing remark about it at a public dinner. Sala was a brilliant talker, provided he had the table to himself. I remember a dinner-party in Harley Street, at which a young doctor, unacquainted with Bohemia, and before poor Sala had got into his stride, started a story of his own. It was an interesting story, and he followed it up with another. The conversation became general. When at last we remembered Sala, we discovered he had gone home.

Afterwards I tried *Tinsley's Magazine*. I never found old Tinsley at his office, but generally at a favourite little place of his near by. Prohibition was not then within the range of practical politics, as Mr. Gladstone would have put it; and the editorial fraternity had not begun to even think about it. I remember the first man who ordered tea and toast at the Savage Club. The waiter begged his pardon and the man repeated it. The waiter said "Yes, sir," and went downstairs and told the steward. Fortunately, the steward was a married man. His wife lent her teapot and took charge of the affair. It was the talk of the club for a fortnight. Most of the members judged it to be a sign of the coming decline and fall of English literature.

Eventually, despairing of the popular magazines, I sent it to a penny paper called *The Play*, which had just been started; and four days later came an answer. It ran: "Dear Sir,—I like your articles very much. Can you call on me to-morrow morning before twelve?—Yours truly, W. AYLMER GOWING, Editor, *The Play*." I did not sleep that night.

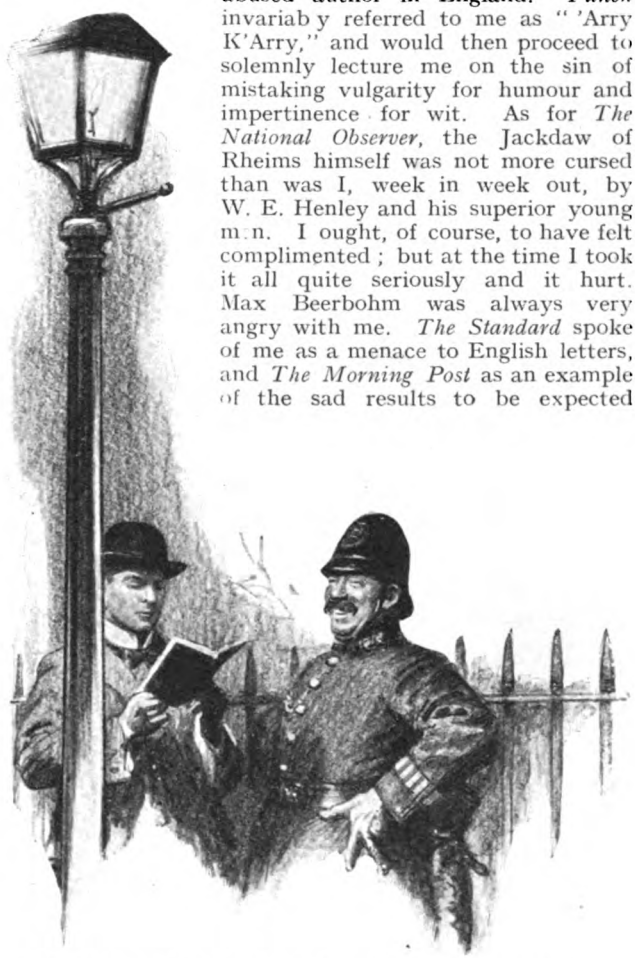
Aylmer Gowing was a retired actor. As "Walter Gordon" he had been leading juvenile at the Haymarket Theatre under Buckstone. "Gentleman Gordon," Charles Mathews had nicknamed him. He had married well, and ran *The Play* at a yearly loss because he could not bear to be unconnected with his beloved stage. His wife, a little bird-like woman, wrote poetry for it. They lived in a pretty little house in Victoria Road, Kensington. He was the first "editor" who up till then had seemed glad to see me when I entered the room. He held out both hands to me, and offered me a cigarette. It all seemed like a dream. He told me that what he liked about my story was that it was true. He had been through it all himself forty years before. He asked me what I wanted for the serial rights. I was only too willing to let him have them for nothing, upon which he shook hands with me again and gave me a five-pound note. It was the first time I had ever possessed a five-pound note. I could not bear the idea of spending it. I put it away at the bottom of an old tin box where I kept my few treasures: old photographs, letters, and a lock of hair. Later, when the luck began to turn, I fished it out, and with it, at a secondhand shop in Goodge Street, I purchased an old Chippendale bureau which has been my desk ever since.

Aylmer Gowing remained always a good

friend to me. Once a week, when he was in town, I dined with him. I guess he knew what a good dinner meant to a youngster living in lodgings on twenty-five shillings a week. At his house I met my first celebrities: John Clayton, the actor, with his wife, a daughter of Dion Boucicault. Poor Clayton! I remember a first night at the Court Theatre when he had to play the part of an adoring husband whose wife has run away. The thing had happened to him that very afternoon. We thought he would break down, but he played it out to the end, and then went back to his empty house. Old Buckstone, Mrs. Chippendale, and Palgrave Simpson, the dramatist, were among others. Palgrave Simpson had a great beaked nose and piercing dark eyes. He always wore a long cloak and a slouched hat; and one fifth of November arrived at the Garrick Club followed by a crowd of cheering urchins, who thought Guy Fawkes had come to life again. Mrs. Chippendale was a very stout lady. I remember a revival of "Homeward Bound" at the Haymarket in which she gained the biggest laugh of the evening. She was wandering about the deck of the ship, carrying a ridiculous little camp stool, but as she carried it behind her nobody could see it. "Looking for a seat, dear?" asked old Buckstone, who was playing her husband. "Got a seat," she answered; "looking for somewhere to put it."

All my new friends thought it would be easy to find a publisher for the book. They gave me letters of introduction. But publishers were just as dense as editors had been. From most of them I gathered that the making of books was a pernicious and unprofitable occupation for everybody concerned. Some thought the book might prove successful if I paid the expense of publication. But upon my explaining my financial position they were less impressed with its merits. To come to the end, Tuer of the Leadenhall Press offered to publish it on terms of my making him a free gift of the copyright. The book sold fairly well, but the critics were shocked. The majority denounced it as rubbish, and then, three years later, on reviewing my next book, "The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow," regretted that an author who had written such an excellent first book should have followed it up by so unworthy a successor.

I think I may claim to have been, for the first twenty years of my career, the best-abused author in England. *Punch* invariably referred to me as "'Arry K'Arry," and would then proceed to solemnly lecture me on the sin of mistaking vulgarity for humour and impertinence for wit. As for *The National Observer*, the Jackdaw of Rheims himself was not more cursed than was I, week in week out, by W. E. Henley and his superior young men. I ought, of course, to have felt complimented; but at the time I took it all quite seriously and it hurt. Max Beerbohm was always very angry with me. *The Standard* spoke of me as a menace to English letters, and *The Morning Post* as an example of the sad results to be expected from the over-education of the lower orders. At the opening dinner of the Krasnapolski Restaurant in Oxford Street (now the Frascati) I was placed next to Harold Frederic, just arrived from America. I noticed that he had been looking at me with curiosity. "Where's your flint hammer?" he asked me suddenly. "Left it in the cloak-room?" He explained that he had visualized me from reading the



Whenever I made the officer laugh, I went home feeling I had done good work.

English literary journals and had imagined something prehistoric.

F. W. Robinson, the novelist (author of "Grandmother's Money") was my next editor. He had just launched a monthly magazine called *Home Chimes*. I sent him the first of my "Idle Thoughts," and he wrote me to come and see him. He lived in a pleasant old house in leafy Brixton, as it might have been called then; and I had tea with him in his fine library, looking out upon the garden. It was wintry weather, and quite a large party of birds were feeding on a one-legged table just outside. Every now and then one of them would come close up to the window and scream; and then Robinson, saying "Excuse me a minute," would cut a slice of cake and take it out to them. He liked my essay, he told me; there was a new note in it; and it was arranged that I should write him a baker's dozen.

Swinburne, Watts-Dunton, Dr. Westland Marston and his blind son Philip, the poet, Coulson Kernahan, William Sharp, Coventry Patmore, Bret Harte, and J. M. Barrie were among my fellow-contributors to *Home Chimes*. Barrie has left it on record that his chief purpose in coming to London was to see with his own eyes the editorial office from which *Home Chimes* was broadcast to the world. He had been disappointed to find it up two flights of stairs in a narrow lane off Paternoster Row. He had expected that, if only as the result of his own contributions, Robinson would have been occupying more palatial premises.

Barrie was an excellent after-dinner speaker, on the rare occasions when he could be induced to overcome his shyness. His first attempt, according to his own account, was at a students' dinner given to Professor Blackie in Glasgow. Blackie had accepted on the express condition that there was to be no speech-making—a thing he could not abide. After the dinner, by way of a rag, Barrie, who was unaware of the stipulation, was half bullied, half flattered into getting on his legs and proposing the Professor's health. For the first minute and a half the Professor glared at him, voiceless with amazement. When Barrie came to this being the proudest moment of his life and so forth, Blackie sprang from his chair and turned upon him like a roaring lion. Denouncing him as the offspring of Satan out of Chaos, and the whole remainder of the company as fit only for the hangman's rope, he strode out of the room. Barrie, more dead than alive, sat down and tried

Professor Blackie returned at the moment when "Great God, if the chiel isna' at it still!" he

to think of a prayer; but as the evening wore on, surrounded by hilarity, recovered his spirits. Toasts and speeches became the order of the evening, and somewhere near to midnight Barrie—this time of his own volition—rose to add his contribution

Barrie was just beginning to be eloquent. exclaimed; and plunged back down the stairs.

to the general happiness. Meanwhile the Professor, reflecting in the calm of his own study that perhaps he had been severe towards his youthful hosts, determined to return and make it up with them. He arrived at the moment when Barrie, warming to his work, was just beginning to be eloquent. The Professor gave one look round the room and then :—

"Great God, if the chiel isna' at it still!" he exclaimed; and plunged back down the stairs.

Robinson could not afford to pay any of us much. I think I had a guinea apiece for my essays; and the bigger men, I fancy, wrote more for love of Robinson than thought of pelf. In those days there was often a fine friendship between an editor and his contributors. There was a feeling that all were members one of another, sharing a common loyalty. I tried, when I became an editor myself, to revive this tradition; and I think to a great extent that I succeeded. But the trusts and syndicates have now killed it. One hands one's work to an agent. He sells it for us over his counter at so much a thousand words. That is the only interest we have in it. Literature is measured to-day by the yard-stick. The last time I was in America, one newspaper was inviting the public from every hoarding to read "our great new dollar-a-word story." I don't know who the author was, the advertisement did not mention his name. "It must be a fine story, that!" one heard the people saying. Myself, the highest figure I have ever reached is ten cents. But even so, my conscience has had much trouble in holding up its end. Every time that, in going over a manuscript, I have knocked out a superfluous adjective or a quite unnecessary pronoun, I have groaned, thinking to myself: "There goes another fourpence"—or fivepence at the present rate of exchange.

It is a pernicious system, putting an unfair strain upon a family man. One's heroine is talking much too much. It is not in keeping with her character. It does not go with her unfathomable eyes. Besides, she's said it all before, in other words, the first time that she met him. From a literary point of view it ought all to come out. The author seizes his blue pencil; but the husband and father stays his hand. "Don't stop her," he whispers, "let her rip. That passionate outpouring of her hidden soul that you think so unnecessary is going to pay my water-rate."

I called my sheaf of essays "The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow"; and again the Leadenhall Press was my publisher. The book sold like hot cakes, as the saying is. Tuer always had clever ideas. He gave it a light yellow cover that stood out well upon the bookstalls. He called each thousand copies an "edition," and before the end of the year was advertising the twenty-third. I was getting a royalty of twopence-halfpenny a copy, and dreamed of a fur coat. I am speaking merely of England. America did me the compliment of pirating the book, and there it sold by the hundred thousand. I reckon my first and worst misfortune in life was being born six years too soon, or, to put it the other way round, that America's conscience on

the subject of literary copyright awoke in her bosom six years too late for me. "Three Men in a Boat" had also an enormous sale in America—from first to last well over a million. Putting aside Henry Holt, dear fellow, who still sends me a small cheque each year, God's Own Country has not yet paid me for either book.

Writing letters to *The Times*, according to Barrie, is—or was in our young days—the legitimate ambition of every Englishman. Barrie was lodging in a turning out of Cavendish Square, and I was in Newman Street, near by. I confided to him one evening that the idea had occurred to me to write a letter to *The Times*. It seemed to me a handy way of keeping one's name before the public.

"They won't insert it," said Barrie.

"Why not?" I demanded.

"Because you're not a married man," he answered. "I've been studying this matter. I've noticed that *The Times* makes a speciality of parents. You are not a parent. You can't sign yourself 'Paterfamilias' or 'Father of Seven'—not yet. You're not even 'An Anxious Mother.' You're not fit to write to *The Times*. Go away. Go away and get married. Beget children. Then come and see me again, and I'll advise you."

Jerome K. Jerome at 35.

We argued the matter. Barrie, by the by, sat down and wrote an article on the subject after I was gone. But I was not to be disheartened. I waited for the Academy to open. As I expected, a letter immediately appeared on the subject of the Nude in Art. It was a perennial topic in the 'eighties. It was signed "British Matron." I forget precisely what I said. It had to be something to attract attention. My argument was that the real culprit was God Almighty. I agreed with "British Matron" that no healthy man or woman—especially woman—was fit to be seen; but pointed out to her that in going for the mere delineator she was venting her indignation on the wrong party. I signed the letter with my name in full; and *The Times*, contrary to Barrie's prediction, inserted it.

In the Victorian Age no respectable citizen mentioned God, except on Sunday. I awoke the next morning to find myself famous—or infamous, I should perhaps say. My only relation worth a penny did say it, and there was an end of that. I didn't mind. I had heard my name spoken in an omnibus. I was a public character.

To subsequent letters of mine *The Times* was equally kind. I wrote upon the dangers of the streets — dogs connected to old ladies by a string; the use of the perambulator in dispersing crowds; the rich man's carpet stretched across the dark pavement and the contemplative pedestrian. I advised "Paterfamilias" what to do with his daughters. I discussed the possibility of living on seven hundred a year. *The Times*, in an editorial, referred to me as a "humorist." I feel the writer meant to be complimentary; but by later critics the term has generally been hurled at me as a reproach.

I was still a literary man only in the evening. From ten to six I remained a clerk. At the time I was with a solicitor named Hodgson in Salisbury Street, Adelphi, where now the Hotel Cecil stands. I would buy a chop or a steak on my way home and have it fried for my tea. The London lodging-house keeper has but one culinary utensil—a frying-pan. Everything goes into it, and everything comes out of it tasting the same.

Then, the table cleared, I would get to my writing. My chief recreation was theatre-going. I got the first-night habit. For great events, such as an Irving production at the Lyceum, or a Gilbert and Sullivan opera, this meant a wait of many hours, ending

in a glorious scrimmage when at last the great doors creaked and the word ran round, "They're opening." First nights were generally on a Saturday. I would leave the office at two and after a light lunch take up my stand outside pit or gallery entrance, according to the state of the exchequer. With experience, some of us learned the trick of squirming our way past the crowd by keeping to the wall. The queue system had not yet been imported. It came from Paris. We despised the Frenchies for submitting to it. Often, arriving only a few minutes before opening time, have I gained a front seat. Looking behind me at poor simple folk who had been waiting all the afternoon, my conscience would prick me. But such is the way of the world, and who was I to criticize my teachers?

We regular first-nighters got to know one another. And to one among us, Heneage Mandell, occurred the idea of forming ourselves into a club, where somewhere out of the rain we could discuss things theatrical and set the stage to rights.

That was the beginning of the Playgoers' Club, which gained much notoriety, and is still, I believe, going strong; though no longer the terror to hide-bound managers and unjust critics that it was in the days of its youth. We met at a coffee shop in Holywell Street, a shady thoroughfare of old half-timbered houses and dust-grimed shop-windows where, jumbled together, were displayed oil paintings "after" Correggio, Teniers, and others; dilapidated jewellery; moth-eaten garments; and books of all sorts and kinds. In Holywell Street stood the old Opera Comique, where the earlier Gilbert and Sullivan operas were produced; close by was the Globe Theatre, in which first "The Private Secretary" and afterwards "Charley's Aunt" both ran for over a thousand nights—a long run in those days; while in Wych Street, round the corner, was the old Olympic, where I first fell in love with Marion Terry. Wych Street led into Clare Market, a region of adventure. All have been swept away.

ADDISON BRIGHT was our first president. He was a small man with a magnificent head. It was said of him that no one could be as clever as he looked. But he got very near it. He shared a studio with Bernard Partridge, the artist, in a street near the Langham Hotel. It was reception-room, dining-room, kitchen, and bedroom combined. There were great gatherings there of youthful wit and wisdom. I had a deep affection for Addison Bright. Why he never went upon the stage I cannot understand; he was a wonderful actor. He could read a play to a manager better than the author could himself; and this led to his becoming a theatrical agent. It was a new idea then. All we younger dramatists were his clients.

All this, however, belongs to another chapter. I speak of the Playgoers' Club here because it led to my writing "Stageland." The father of Heneage Mandell, the founder of the club, was a printer, and we gave the old gentleman no rest till he started a paper called *The Playgoer*. Poor Heneage died not long afterwards, and the paper came to an end. I seem to have written the editorial notes—or some of them. I had forgotten this until glancing through them the other day. I must have been a bit of a prig, I fear. I trust I have outgrown it, but one can never judge oneself. I see that in one number I lecture Marie Tempest and a gentleman named Leslie from a very superior height, pointing out to them the internal satisfaction to be obtained by always wearing the white flower of a blameless life. Also I come across a paragraph censoring the conceit of one Robert Buchanan for thinking the public likely to be interested in his private affairs.

It was in *The Playgoer* that "Stageland" first appeared. The sketches were unsigned, and journals that had been denouncing me and all my works as an insult to English literature hastened to crib them. Afterwards Bernard Partridge illustrated them, and we published them in partnership at our own risk. It proved to me that publishing is quite an easy business. If I had my time over again, I would always be my own publisher.

Bernard Partridge at five-and-twenty was one of the handsomest men in London. I have not seen him for many years. A thing came between us that spoilt our friendship. But this again belongs elsewhere, and I content myself here with saying that he was right and I was wrong. Into "Stageland" he put some of the best work he has ever done. For the hero he drew himself, and Gertrude Kingston sat for the adventuress.

The book was quite a success. They were the palmy days of the old Adelphi. Sims and Pettitt, Manville Fenn, Augustus Harris, Arthur Shirley, Dion Boucicault, and H. A. Jones were all writing melodramas. The stage hero, his chief aim in life to get himself accused of crimes he had never committed; the villain, the only man in the play possessed of a dress suit; the heroine, always in trouble; the stage lawyer, very old and very long and very thin; the adventuress, with a habit of mislaying her husbands; the stage Irishman, who always paid his rent and was devoted to his landlord; the stage sailor, whose trousers never fitted

him—they were well-known characters. All now are gone. If Partridge and myself helped to hasten their end, I am sorry. They were better—more human, more understandable—than many of the new puppets that have taken their place.

I see from old letters that I was studying at this period to become a solicitor. Not that I had any thought of giving up literature. I would combine the two. If barristers—take, for example, Gilbert and Grundy—wrote plays and books, why not solicitors? Besides, I had just married. A new sense of prudence had come to me. "Safety first," as we say now. I was with a Mr. Anderson Rose, in Arundel Street, Strand. He had a fine collection of china and old pewter, and was a well-known art collector. Sandys' portrait of Mrs. Anderson Rose, his mother, made a sensation when it was first exhibited, and is still famous. He was a dear old gentleman. In the office we all loved him. And so did his clients, until soon after his death, when their feelings towards him began to change. I fancy Granville Barker must have known him, or heard of him, and used him for "The Voysey Inheritance."

His death put an end to my dream of being a lawyer. He had been kindness itself to me in helping me, and had promised to put

These illustrations, by Bernard Partridge, to Jerome's "Stageland" are interesting as early examples of the work of the famous "Punch" cartoonist.

work in my way. I decided to burn my boats, and to devote all my time to writing. My wife encouraged me. She is half Irish, and has a strain of recklessness.

(To be continued.)

MR. BILLINGHAM, THE MARQUIS AND MADELON

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBEY

No. 2.—THE NUMBERS OF DEATH.

WHEN the mists roll down from La Turbie and the grey clouds hug the sides of the mountains, Monte Carlo is very far from being itself. The red-coated members of the orchestra at the Café de Paris move inside the building, the waiters stand like wraiths amidst a deserted wilderness of tables. Even a winner leaving the Casino—most easily recognizable of all human beings—forbears to whistle as he descends the steps. But when the sun shines down from a cloudless sky of perfect blue and the women have trooped out like butterflies to drink *apéritifs* under the umbrella-sheltered tables, and the orchestra is playing an Italian love song, and there is a lively murmur of conversation and the chink of ice against the glass, all is well with life and Monte Carlo is a very different place.

Mr. Samuel T. Billingham, with Madelon de Félan for his companion and a pleasantly clouded wineglass on the table by his side, submitted cheerfully to the relaxing influence of his surroundings. He even viewed the approach of the Marquis, Madelon's uncle, with toleration, if not without some apprehension.

"I can't say that I like that fixed smile on your uncle's face," he remarked.

She watched her troublesome relation critically and sighed.

"Jaunty, too," she murmured; "always a bad sign."

The Marquis came up with a wave of his hat. Mr. Billingham made signs to a waiter.

"Just one cocktail, perhaps," the newcomer conceded, "although it is a little early for me. I foolishly came out this morning with almost empty pockets. Have you such a thing as a mille, Madelon?"

She laughed scornfully.

"Am I the sort of girl," she asked, "who goes about with milles in her pocket? I have no money at all with me."

"Perhaps Mr. Billingham——" the Marquis proposed tentatively.

Mr. Billingham considered the matter.

"How much have you lost this morning?" he inquired.

The Marquis coughed.

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"Very little," he declared, straightening his tie. "I brought very little with me. My numbers are turning up, though. I have fixed upon a table where my luck seems to have definitely established itself."

Mr. Billingham withdrew a five-hundred-franc note from his pocket-book and handed it to the Marquis, who departed hastily, after gulping down his refreshment.

"Seems to me that game's got quite a hold upon your uncle," his benefactor observed thoughtfully.

"It is the one curse of the place for us," Madelon assented, with a sigh. "It keeps us always poor. If he cannot go to the Casino he is miserable—like a child in trouble or disgrace. If he goes, he loses. It is always the same. If we had not met you a month ago I cannot imagine what would have become of us."

It was not often that Mr. Billingham's attention wandered when Madelon was speaking, but at this moment he certainly had a lapse. His eyes were fixed upon an approaching figure—a man tall and thin, with a long, hatchet-shaped face, a terrible mouth, and deep-set eyes. He was dressed with unusual sombreness, in clothes of a transatlantic cut, surmounted by a black Homburg, and he walked towards the out-

There was a tiny flash of fire and a sharp report. Ned Gunby spun round and collapsed.

skirts of the scattered company, looking neither to the right nor to the left. Mr. Billingham half rose to his feet.

"Hullo, Ned!" he exclaimed, in welcoming fashion.

The behaviour of this presumed acquaintance of his was, to say the least of it, singular. He scarcely even glanced at Mr. Billingham, whose hand was already outstretched, and passed on, ignoring his greeting. His right hand was in his jacket pocket, and Mr. Billingham, who had formed the habit of quick observation, saw something menacing in the fact.

"Who is your friend who doesn't know you?" Madelon inquired.

Mr. Billingham, recovered from his first surprise, was deeply interested.

"That's Ned Gunby, the biggest man they've got in the New York police," he confided. "I've never known him abroad before. I'd like some to know who he's after!"

"I should be sorry to be that person," Madelon confessed, with a little shiver. "I think he is an awful man."

"Ned hands out the goods all right," Mr. Billingham affirmed. "They say that from the start he has arrested more dangerous criminals than any man in the police force."

"He seems to be very much in earnest about something just now," Madelon observed.

They both watched his progress with riveted attention, whilst he threaded his way through the maze of tables. At the farthest table, close to a shed in which was displayed a car for which lottery tickets were being sold, a man was seated alone, leaning back in his chair and with his face half concealed by a newspaper which he was reading. He showed no signs of being aware of the detective's approach, and even Mr. Billingham failed to catch that surreptitious movement of the paper and stealthy glance. What followed was a matter of seconds. The detective, with his hand half withdrawn from his jacket pocket, had reached his destination.

"Jim Robin," he said, in a harsh, unpleasant voice, "throw 'em up! Quick as hell! I want you!"

The answer was a tiny flash of fire and a sharp report. Ned Gunby, for once in his life late in the draw, spun round like a teetotum and collapsed against the table. For a single second conversation all around was entirely suspended. There was a tense stillness, with only the music as a background. Then there was a rush from all quarters. A gendarme from across the road was actually betrayed into running. A few women screamed. Everyone asked breathlessly what had happened. Mr. Billingham shook his head as he leaned over the body of his acquaintance.

"He's sure got his," he decided.

The authorities at Monte Carlo are adepts at wiping from the face of the earth all traces of tragical events. In a few moments the body of the wounded man was whisked away in a closed motor-car. A functionary in plain clothes, who seemed to have arrived by magic, patiently interviewed the few spectators, with indifferent results. No one appeared to have seen the fugitive distinctly. He had, without a doubt, escaped by passing behind the shed where the car was exhibited and mingling with the crowd of people entering the Casino, but, although several had seen him disappear, there was not a single credible item of information as to his later movements. The hand of Justice was temporarily, at any rate, baulked.

Late that afternoon Mr. Billingham, in response to an urgent message, was driven to the little whitewashed hospital on the slopes of the hill and listened to the last words of a dying man. The bullet had found its way into the detective's lungs and speech was difficult. Nevertheless, he said what he had to say.

"Reckon I'm too old for the job, Mr. Billingham," he confessed, "but I'll hand it to him that it was the quickest draw I ever saw."

"It was that, Ned," was his visitor's sympathetic assent. "You don't want to talk too much. Tell me who he was, what you wanted him for, and what I can do for you."

"That was James Robin, who murdered Hammon, the banker, last year—got him fixed on that Bundell poisoning case, too," the detective announced. "I've got all the papers on the table there—the extradition warrant, and there's this," the suffering man added, lifting his badge from under his pillow and passing it across. "You've puzzled me more than once, Billingham, but if you're a crook you're a straight one. Take this on for me. James Robin ain't got no right to live. He's a white-livered skunk. Gave his own pals away in the Bennett case, or he'd have been sent to the penitentiary then."

"I guess that's so," the other acquiesced. "I remember the whole affair. Anything you know likely to help about his movements here?"

"He's been going by the name of Braund — James Braund," the detective confided. "There's a woman with him—picked her up on this side, I reckon. They had rooms at the Boston Hotel, up at the back. The police here are watching it, but I've told them you're in the force and will take over. Shake hands, Billingham. Glad to have an American round, anyway."

The two men shook hands solemnly, and the nurse, who saw the things which Ned Gunby felt, hurried up. Mr. Billingham stepped back into the world of sunshine and flowers and music with a mist before his eyes. Death in such surroundings was so unrealizable. There was suddenly a chill in the air and a note of discord in the music, which seemed to have become blatant. Mr. Billingham entered upon his task with a heavy heart.

WITH Madelon's help as interpreter, Mr. Billingham had several long conversations with the local functionaries, and was enabled to make certain arrangements towards the prosecution of his mission. He spent that night seated in an easy-chair in the bedroom which had been allotted at the Boston Hotel to Monsieur and Madame Braund, and which had remained unoccupied since the time of the tragedy. At three o'clock, however, there was the sound of feminine footsteps outside and the turning of a key in the door. Mr. Billingham switched on the lights and the woman who had entered screamed.

"Don't disturb yourself, madame," he begged. "I've taken over Ned Gunby's job. Where's your husband?"

The woman, after a moment's hesitation, slipped off her cloak, seated herself in an easy-chair, and lit a cigarette. She was a person of somewhat flamboyant type, with hair of an almost startling shade of red and eyes unnaturally darkened.

"Who are you, anyway?" she demanded.

Mr. Billingham disclosed his badge.

"I'm out to get Braund," he declared, "and I'm going to have him."

"Seems to me you're looking for trouble," she remarked. "What do you know about Braund?"

"Your husband," Mr. Billingham observed.

She laughed shrilly.

"Not much," she scoffed. "If you want to know the truth, I picked him up at the Carlton three weeks ago."

Mr. Billingham was silent for several moments. He took out his cigar-case.

"Guess I'll smoke, too," he observed. "Anything to drink up here?"

The woman went to a chiffonier and produced a bottle of brandy, a bottle of whisky, and some soda-water. She helped herself liberally to brandy and Mr. Billingham mixed himself a whisky-and-soda.

"So you ain't his wife?" he said at last.

"Thank the Lord I'm not," she answered. "I shouldn't care to be in this mix-up. I've come here to get my things, and I'm going to move into a little flat round the corner."

"Where is Braund?" Mr. Billingham asked abruptly.

"How should I know?" she retorted. "And if I did know, can you see me telling you?"

"You might avoid a heap of trouble that way," was the suggestive rejoinder.

The lady smiled.

"Look here," she said. "I'm no chicken, Mr. Billingham—or whatever your name is. There's nothing wrong with me, except that I took up with a man who turned out to be a criminal. That don't make me one. There's nothing coming to me from you or anyone else."

"What sort of a chap is he, this Braund?"

The woman hesitated for a moment. Her tone was a little more serious.

"A devil!" she answered. "Hard as they make 'em!"

"Treat you well?"

"No better than he ought to," was the somewhat indifferent reply. "I shouldn't call him a spender."

"I want Braund," Mr. Billingham confided. "I want him badly."

"How's the detective he shot?" the woman demanded.

"Dead," Mr. Billingham told her, solemnly.

The woman was a little shocked.

"I suppose it had to be one of them," she mused. "They tell me that if my friend had been arrested it would have been the chair for him."

"It certainly would have been, and it will be," Mr. Billingham assented.

"You think you'll get him, then?" she asked, curiously.

"I do," was the confident reply, "and you're going to help me."

She stared at him.

"Seem to have got me sized up," she remarked. "Do you think that I'd give him away if I knew where he was?"

"You're not a fool," her companion argued. "You're a woman of the world. Braund's no more use to you. You're through with him all right. Sooner or later we shall get him. Why not have your bit out of it?"

The woman shivered. It seemed as though Mr. Billingham was being wilfully callous.

"You must think I'm as cold-blooded as Ned Gunby himself," she muttered.

"I sized you up as having some sense," Mr. Billingham answered slowly. 'This man ain't been anything special to you, and you can take it from me he's a real out-and-out, downright bad 'un. He'd throw you or any other woman on the dirt heap if it helped him any. He's not going to worry any more about you. All he's thinking of is his own skin. As for you, the thing's come your way. You haven't been out to look for it. Why not put a matter of five thousand dollars in your pocket?"

THE woman sat for a moment transfixed. Mr. Billingham, watching her closely, found it difficult to follow her train of thought.

"I've never done anyone a dirty trick like that," she said.

There was a gleam in Mr. Billingham's eyes. She knew, then!

"It isn't a very dirty trick," he protested. "James Braund in Monte Carlo is like a rat in a pit. He can't get out. We shall have him all right, but the sooner the better. There's a ten-thousand-dollar reward for him. I'm offering you half."

"Cash?" she demanded.

"Cash," he assented, tapping his pocket-book.

She had the air of a woman tortured by ugly thoughts. Presently she helped herself to more brandy.

"It doesn't matter what you say," she declared. "It's a dirty piece of work."

"Life here," Mr. Billingham reminded her, "is expensive for a woman like you, who needs jewellery and swell clothes. Bit anxious sometimes, eh? Why not make yourself sure for a time? Five thousand dollars at to-day's exchange is a lot of money."

"What is it you want me to do?" she inquired, in a voice to which she seemed afraid to listen.

"You know where Braund is," Mr. Billingham said. "Help me to put the irons on him."

"You are sure he'll go to the chair?" she asked, with a queer little quiver in her voice.

"He'll go there anyway," was the confident reply. "The only question is whether you make five thousand dollars out of it or whether you don't."

"Five thousand dollars!" she repeated slowly.

She seemed to be thinking about the sum. Presently she picked up a piece of paper and, with a gold pencil which hung from her reticule, she worked out the amount in francs. There was a covetous gleam in her eyes.

"I'll do it," she decided.

"Of course you will," Mr. Billingham observed, in a tone which was almost matter-of-fact. "You'd be stark raving mad if you hesitated. Go on!"

She looked at him curiously.

"I've heard of you," she reflected. "Samuel Billingham, isn't it? You've been mixed up in some queer cases, but no one seems to know whether you're on the straight or the other side of the fence. How's your nerve?"

Mr. Billingham smiled.

"I guess that's all right," he assured her.

"Got your gun handy?"

He tapped his hip pocket.

"Would you like to take him right now?" she asked, "in a quarter of an hour's time, that is?"

"Suit me O.K.," Mr. Billingham acquiesced. "I've handcuffs in my pocket and a car on the other side of the square."

The woman rose to her feet. She seemed in some subtle sort of way to have changed, to have lost her airy—almost brazen—ease of manner, to be anticipating already grave things. Mr. Billingham watched her, and

it seemed to him that she was still hesitating.

"Five thousand dollars," he said, reflectively, "at to-day's rate of exchange, is seventy-five thousand francs."

She sighed like one who faces the inevitable. Then she glanced at the watch on her wrist.

"Braund," she confided, her voice lower and thicker, her eyes fixed upon the ground, "has papers or money—perhaps a large sum of money—in this room, which he would not trust me to fetch. I came on to see whether the coast was clear. If I lift that blind at four o'clock and turn on the electric light, he will ascend."

"They will be waiting for him below," Mr. Billingham reminded her.

"The front door is locked," she told him, "and we all have latchkeys. The concierge is not on duty. I have seen to that—I and a hundred francs. At four o'clock he will enter if I turn the lights on and lift the blind, but when you hear his step on the stair be ready."

Mr. Billingham nodded.

"What about you?" he asked.

She shivered.

"He is watching now," she replied. "I dare not try to get away. I shall hide in the corner there, behind the wardrobe. Remember that if you make a mess of this," she went on anxiously, "it will be my life as well as yours. You know what sort of man James Braund is. You know how he treated Ned Gunby. You get no more mercy from him than from a stone."

"Nor he from me," Mr. Billingham assured her grimly.

They compared watches. It was ten minutes to four. The woman helped herself feverishly to more brandy. Mr. Billingham followed suit with another whisky-and-soda. Then he took out his revolver and looked at it, laid a pair of handcuffs on the table, and lit another cigar. The woman watched him, and apparently she was satisfied. The fingers which held his match did not once quiver, his face seemed somehow to have hardened and tightened. He had all the air of a man who expects to confront a crisis and is prepared for it. Of the two, the woman was by far the more nervous. Nevertheless, when four o'clock came she turned on the other switches of electric light, touched the spring of the blind, and threw open the shutters.

"Good luck!" she muttered—"to both of us!"

THE seconds passed, perhaps a minute—then the step upon the stair. The woman crept into her hiding-place. She had dabbed her face plentifully with powder, but little drops of perspiration had broken through on to her forehead, her lips were vivid streaks of scarlet, in her eyes was fear. Mr. Billingham stood with his left hand upon the bed-post, and in his right hand was his revolver. The footstep was nearer now. The door was suddenly pushed open and Mr. Billingham's voice rang out, crisp and terse.

"Hands up—right up above your head! Up, I say!"

For a single second the man who stood upon the threshold seemed as though his right hand would dive downward. Then he looked into that tiny black space, saw the lights flash upon the plating of the revolver, and saw behind, Billingham's face. His hands went up.

"Who the hell are you?" he demanded.

"Billingham of New York, and I've taken on Ned Gunby's job," was the quick reply.

The man with his hands upraised was still a formidable-looking person. He was of little more than medium height, but strongly built, dark, with crisp black hair, olive complexion, and eyes with violet rims underneath, which spoke of sleepless nights. There was about him, somehow or other, an air of fastidiousness, although his linen was crumpled and his boots ill-brushed. All the time it seemed as though his brain were working—his eyes searching the room.

"Where's Anna?" he inquired.

Mr. Billingham ignored the question. With his left hand he picked up the handcuffs and came a step nearer.

"Lower your hands slowly," he enjoined, "until they point towards me. Keep your wrists together!"

The man obeyed. He was breathing heavily.

"Stop there!" Mr. Billingham ordered.

He stopped, but his eyes seemed filled with a tortured light. He seemed to be wondering, speculating. Suddenly, with a movement incredibly swift, he was in Mr. Billingham's grasp, Billingham's left arm underneath his hands to keep them from that downward dive. A moment later there was a click and the handcuffs were on. Mr. Billingham coolly produced the revolver from the man's hip pocket and thrust it into his own.

"That seems all right," he said. "What did you come back here to look for, Braund?"

"Find out," was the contemptuous reply.

There was a sob from behind the chiffonier. The man turned his head slowly. The woman crept into sight. Braund only nodded quietly.

"Like all the rest," he muttered. "You

couldn't be trusted. Do you know, woman, that it is my life you've given away—my life for a few dirty dollars ?"

"I'm sorry," she gasped. "You shouldn't have killed him, James. They'd have got you, anyhow."

Mr. Billingham, with the situation arranged to his liking, felt completely at his ease. He took out his pocket-book and from a wonderful pile of bills counted out seventy-five mille notes. Notwithstanding the tenseness of the moment, the woman could not keep the covetous gleam from her eyes.

"I guess those are yours," Mr. Billingham said. "You needn't worry that you've done anything dirty, either. He was my man from the start. Come along, James Braund. We'll put you somewhere until we can arrange to get you across the pond."

"You know what sort of man James Braund is. You get no more mercy from him than from a stone."

"Nor he from me," Mr. Billingham assured her grimly.

The woman fingered the bills and watched them depart, Mr. Billingham holding his captor by the arm. As they passed through the door, she called out.

"I am sorry, Jim," she cried. "I'm sorry I did it."

"You can go to hell!" was the bitter rejoinder.

The two men walked down the narrow stairs and across the darkened hall, Mr. Billingham with his revolver in his hand and every sense alert. They reached the street, however, in safety, entered the car, and drove to the police office down in Monaco, where a little crowd of functionaries was awaiting them. Mr. Billingham remained until the iron door of a very formidable-looking cell was locked upon his captive. Then he drew a sigh of relief, mingled with some other less comprehensible emotion.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed. "Some evening!"

THE trio—Madelon, her uncle the Marquis, and Mr. Billingham—were seated at their favourite table in front of the Café de Paris. An unusual silence had reigned for some minutes, which was broken at last by Madelon.

"I am dissatisfied with life," she sighed, sipping her Dubonnet.

Her uncle glanced at her reprovingly.

"My dear Madelon!" he protested. "Surely that is ungrateful to our kind friend who has provided so generously for our entertainment?"

She made a little grimace.

"I have a complaint against him," she declared. "He provides me with no one to flirt with and he ignores me himself. He has become a hero and he is all the time distrait. I think that his head is turned."

"Why should I provide you with anyone to flirt with?" Mr. Billingham objected. "I guess that's my privilege."

"It might have been," Madelon admitted, "if you had been persistent, if you had shown rather more desire to be in my company, to whisper things in my ear, to look as though my presence made the difference to you of happiness or misery. But behold, for five minutes this morning after my arrival you sat and you looked towards the Casino and you said nothing. You might even have held my fingers—I purposely let them stay in your hand. And there are other things."

Mr. Billingham groaned.

"Go on with it, then," he begged. "Let me know the full extent of my misdeeds."

"Your passion for me," she complained, "has given way to another. You are as bad as my uncle. You spend your time in the Casino. You have become a gambler. When you might be taking me for a little drive to the hills—I love motoring so much that there is no telling how gracious I might be—you stay in that terrible Casino, gambling—not even like a man who seeks the great things, one who deals in maximums in the Cercle Privé or at the Sporting Club, but playing for louis in the 'kitchen.' Bah! It is incredible! Why do you do it? I demand an explanation!"

Mr. Billingham's attention had wandered away. His eyes were fixed upon the little crowd entering the Casino. For once in his life he was almost indifferent to his charming companion.

"I guess I'll go and play a *coup* or two before luncheon," he announced, rising to his feet. "Don't wait for me if I'm late. Henry will see that you are well served."

Madelon made one last attempt to understand.

"Is it possible," she demanded, "that you have embarked upon another adventure without our aid?"

"If I do not return for luncheon," was the evasive reply, "I will tell you everything at dinner-time."

He crossed the Place—a trifle burly in appearance, but walking with the spring of a young man; erect, self-confident. A commissionaire saluted him, the cloak-room attendant recognized him as a generous donor of *pourboires*, the ushers at the door bowed at his coming. He staked a *coup* or two at the table on the right. Then he turned to the table on the left. Every place was occupied and there was a row of people standing looking on. Mr. Billingham took his place amongst them. This time he staked nothing, however. He stood behind the chair of a slim elderly man who wore dark tortoiseshell spectacles and who had just taken a vacant place. By his side sat Anna, the woman who had betrayed her lover.

"*Faites vos jeux, messieurs,*" the croupier invited.

The man in front of Mr. Billingham threw four louis on the table.

"*Sept, quatorze, vingt-huit—vingt-neuf, vingt-neuf en plein,*" he said.

Mr. Billingham glanced meaningly towards a tall dark man who had moved stealthily to his side. A quick nod was exchanged. Then a singular thing happened. Mr. Billingham, whose arms were almost as powerful as the arms of a prize-fighter, suddenly gripped both wrists of the man seated in front of him and held them together as though in a vice. The tall dark man leaned over and touched him on the shoulder.

The handcuffs clicked upon the man's wrists.

" In the name of the police, monsieur," he whispered.

The woman looked round, recognized Mr. Billingham, and shrieked. The man turned towards her. His teeth were suddenly parted. He seemed about to rise, making no movement of resistance. The woman thrust her hand into her sacque, her fingers towards his mouth. His teeth closed with a snap. Then he rose calmly to his feet.

" If you have a car or anything," he said, " you had better get me into it. A person of brains, Mr. Billingham. I congratulate you."

Mr. Billingham's grip upon the man's wrists was never for a moment relaxed. Play had ceased and people were crowding up, only to be kept away by two plain-clothes gendarmes who had suddenly made their appearance and a small army of the Casino functionaries.

" The gentleman is taken ill," someone announced. " Make way, please."

The handcuffs clicked upon the man's wrists, but he only shrugged his shoulders. He commenced his passage towards the door with Mr. Billingham on one side and the man who had arrested him on the other. His steps, however, became uncertain. He turned and looked back at the woman. She was standing, a terrible figure of misery, a few yards off. He forced a little smile into his face.

" Don't take her money away, Billingham, even if she fooled you," he begged. " You've come out on top, you see."

" What's wrong with you ? " his captor demanded, suspiciously.

" Cyanide of potassium," was the grim

reply. "Anna had it ready for me in case we didn't make a get-away. You'll have to carry me down the steps. What about it, Billingham? If she fooled you, it was life or death for me."

"That's all right," Mr. Billingham promised. "I've nothing against her. I guess she can keep what she's got."

MADELON and her uncle had finished their *hors d'œuvre* and commenced the grilled chicken when Mr. Billingham joined them. He took the vacant place opposite Madelon and signified his pressing need of some alcoholic refreshment. He was looking very grave and he had lost a good deal of his healthy colour.

"Something has happened!" Madelon exclaimed.

"We have just arrested Braund," Mr. Billingham confided. "Touch and go it was, too. They were off this afternoon."

"Arrested Braund?" Madelon repeated, incredulously. "Why, you arrested him ten days ago! The papers said they were taking him back to America to-morrow."

Mr. Billingham was slowly recovering himself. He was still, however, very grave.

"I haven't let you two in on this," he explained, "because there was nothing you could do. I had to play, as it were, a lone hand. When I promised Ned Gunby I'd see this thing through, he gave me a little pile of papers about Braund and a note of a few of his weaknesses. He didn't tell me much about the woman, though, and I honestly believed that she was on the straight when she offered to sell me Braund for half the reward."

"But the man you arrested at the Boston Hotel——"

"Braund's brother-in-law," Mr. Billingham interrupted, "the decoy whilst Braund made a get-away. He didn't run any particular risk. There were dozens to identify him the moment he was hauled up in New York. I thought it was all right until I had the handcuffs on him. Then I saw that he wasn't anything like the description of the man I wanted, and, besides, he put up no sort of a fight. I let them believe I was fooled all right and we've kept him in prison. In the meantime we've watched Madame. She's been damned artful; pretended to be playing the restaurant game at the Carlton and those places, but she was continually disappearing. Then I got her dossier. She was Braund's wife right enough, but wherever he was hiding in Monte Carlo she never went near him. I noticed, though, that she spent a lot of time at the Casino, and amongst Gunby's papers was a little note that the passion of Braund's life was roulette, and that if anything could bring him out of his hiding it would be to gamble. He played on four numbers only—seven, fourteen, twenty-eight, and twenty-nine. I sort of hung around and waited for someone sitting near Madame who backed just those numbers. We very nearly brought it off yesterday morning, but this morning it was a cert. They entered almost at the same time, went to the same table, sat next each other. I gave 'em the office outside, and pretty soon—well—seven, fourteen, twenty-eight, and twenty-nine! I got him by the wrists so that he couldn't move whilst they took his gun away—got him from behind."

The Marquis looked longingly towards the Casino.

"And we missed it!" he murmured.

"I shouldn't have let you be there," Mr. Billingham assured him. "There's no knowing how those things are going to turn out till they're over. After all, in a way he tricked us."

"How?" Madelon asked.

"The woman again! A common-looking bit of goods, but Braund was her man and she saw him through it. The moment they realized that he was done she handed him the poison—put it into his mouth herself, in fact. It was all over before they got him into the car."

"Horrible!" Madelon exclaimed, with a little shudder.

Mr. Billingham ordered his lunch.

"Horrible it is," he admitted, as he laid down the menu, "but there is just one thing that makes me glad of my morning's work."

"One thing?" the Marquis murmured, politely.

Mr. Billingham inclined his head towards the hill.

"That little hospital," he confided. "Poor Ned Gunby with a bullet in his chest, shot on sight for doing his duty. I guess Braund has got what was coming to him."

Nevertheless, the shadow remained—the shadow of tragedy, which never leaves the atmosphere of sudden death. Mr. Billingham called for the wine list and revised his order.

"I should like our next adventure," Madelon confided, a few moments later, "to end in a laugh instead of a tragedy."

Something of the grimness passed from Mr. Billingham's face. He watched the pouring out of the wine.

"I guess I have an idea of that sort myself," he agreed. "Supposing——"

(Another story in this thrilling series next month.)

WHEN I WAS YOUNG

A SERIES of ARTICLES by CELEBRITIES of TO-DAY describing HOW THEY VIEWED LIFE IN THEIR EARLY YEARS

No. 6

J. H. TAYLOR

(The famous Professional of the Mid-Surrey Golf Club and five times Open Champion.)

IT has been the fashion in recent years to condemn the calling of a golf caddie because it is alleged that the occupation is a "dead end" and leads nowhere. There is some truth in the assertion when it is directed toward those courses on which men are employed, but even then there is some injustice in it. Caddies, wherever they may be employed, are not so remuneratively paid that they desire to cling to the office in order to make a career for themselves. Those that do may be dismissed as possessing a mentality that unfits them for anything higher, and it is as well that they remain patient beasts of burden for the golfer. I am going to be bold and assert that a caddie's job is a most desirable one for *boys*—mark the word—because it brings them into direct personal touch with people who are in a higher social scale and presumably have the brains and other attendant advantages to fit them for it.

I have always counted myself fortunate to have been born at Northam, Devon, within a mile of Westward Ho! links, and equally fortunate that the indigent circumstances in which my parents were placed compelled me at a very early age and when time allowed to seek employment there to add to the meagre family exchequer. It badly needed adding to. I never remember my father earning more than sixteen shillings a week, for which he was only too willing to turn his hand to anything that came his way. Whether the work was that of a quarryman, well-sinker, or mason's labourer mattered not so long as it brought in sufficient to keep a very modest cottage going at a rent of two shillings and sixpence a week, and feed and inadequately clothe five hungry children. I have always been grateful to Providence for giving me such parents as I had. It is not too much to

say that they slaved for their children's welfare. They both had high ideals, a horror of anything mean, petty, or spiteful, a love of books, and intense admiration for education and all that it implies. When my brothers and I were busy at nights at our home lessons, I remember gratefully the pride that possessed my parents if our industry was pointed out to any neighbours that chanced to come in.

I received the ordinary village education, and whilst undergoing it gained the impression, which has since then grown stronger, that the village schoolmaster, or any schoolmaster, does more in his single capacity to develop a character than any other member of the community. I was fortunate in mine. Mr. Bottomley was a strict disciplinarian, rather quick to anger, but had the instinct for teaching, and, judging by the awe which he inspired, his subordinates tried to follow his good example. The longer I went to school the more it was borne in upon my mind that education did not only mean that one should be fully conversant with the three R's. Education in itself can carry one but a little way in the world, but if one can grasp its vital meaning and apply it to everyday life it is all-conquering. The vicar of our parish and my dear old Sunday-school teacher, Captain W. Blakeney, R.N., did much to inculcate these truths into me, and I hope I profited.

Captain Blakeney was a rare man, a world-wide traveller, filled with a great pride of the Empire and its good to the world. Loyal in every fibre of his body to all its glorious traditions, he possessed a simple faith which made him shine out among men as a just, upright, Christian gentleman. I trust I paid heed to his many exhortations, and I here pay tribute to his memory as one who pulled his full weight in the race of life.

I LEARNT to love books, and as a true Devonian and one who was born just outside the walls of Burrough House, where Amyas Leigh first saw the light, I devoured "Westward Ho!" No one who has read Kingsley's classic can but be thrilled at that wonderful story of adventure, heroism, and devotion. I, who had only to look out from the back door of our cottage to see the grand sweep of Bideford Bay and Lundy Island in the distance, and remember that in our churchyard lay the mortal remains of Salvation Yeo, may be forgiven if I still think the book one of the greatest ever written. The names of Raleigh, Hawkins, Grenville, Frobisher, and Drake are an inspiration to all true Devonians, and I count myself one of Devon's most loyal sons.

I left school before I was eleven years of age, and I had to hie to the links all and every day to try and pick up the sixpences that were a caddie's pay for a full round of the links. The employment was spasmodic and the getting of it mainly depended on our fleetness of foot. I was not a very robust boy, and was often outdistanced by others in running for chances, but I soon found out that prospective employers were influenced by other things rather than the quick covering of the ground. I had made a name for civility and attention to duties, and though I might lag behind and come up breathlessly to offer my services, I was employed more often than not. A caddie's life is a great educator. If he is willing to learn and shows an intelligent desire to try and improve his mind and his vocabulary, he has plenty of opportunities to do so. I am afraid that my anxiety to keep close to the heels of my employer was prompted not so much by the endeavour to please as by a wish to listen to any conversation that was going on and to learn what was happening in the large outside world. It was in this way that I first heard of the disaster of Isandula and the heroic defence of Rorke's Drift in the Zulu War of 1879, and I still remember the pride that filled my feeble frame when I heard the details of that glorious feat. I was eight years old at the time. I "carried" for all and sundry that frequented the links, but I must confess that I had my favourites, on whom I considered it a favour to bestow my patronage. I had a leaning, like all caddies, towards the low handicap players, not because their service was more remunerative, since it was generally the reverse, but for the reason that by watching I could pick up "tips" that might prove useful. In any case, there were good models to copy at Westward Ho! in the three brothers Allan—Johnny, Mat, and Jamie—all three fine players and each with a distinctive style of his own.

My favourite player of the three was Jamie. I was his devoted disciple and certainly modelled my youthful swing as far as I could upon his. Incidentally, his stance was a decidedly "open" one, and I always stood "open," much more markedly so in my young days than I do now. We caddies had the firm belief that Jamie Allan was invincible, and when we saw Jamie Anderson beat him we realized that there were more things than were dreamed of in our golfing philosophy. That match was played when I was about eight, and I remember it most vividly.

I am afraid I rather scorned carrying the clubs of the duffers, and although they inflicted themselves occasionally upon me, I was in no hurry to patronize them. I am not holding myself up as a paragon of all the virtues, if indeed there are any such among

caddies, so I will confess to one rather despicable incident in connection with two distinguished military gentlemen. They both were very bad players, and I with a group of other caddies thought it beneath our dignity to serve them. We hid in a ditch, but we were outflanked by the minions of discipline and law, and hauled before the despised ones. General S., a celebrated Indian warrior, gave us so thorough a talking to, permeated with kindness, that I felt heartily ashamed of my conduct and afterwards made amends by seeking his service whenever I could.

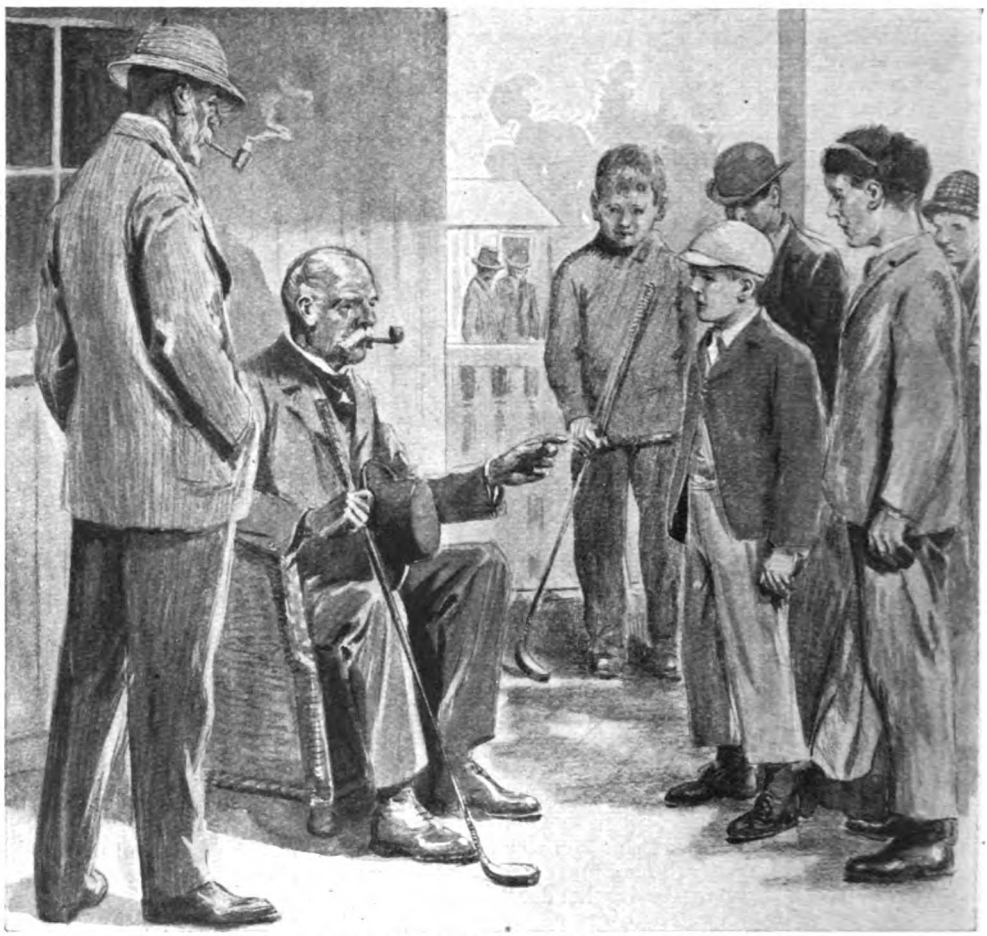
As a caddie at Westward Ho!

J. H. Taylor is the boy in the centre of the group wearing a white cap.

There was a cholera scare on the Continent in 1884 or thereabouts, and Prince Windisch-Grätz, who afterwards became Prime Minister of Austria, came to Westward Ho! to escape it. The Prince desired to try his hand at the game, and I was deputed to attend to His Highness's wants. He was a hopeless beginner, but I tolerated this, thinking myself compensated by the dignity the employment conferred. This dignity was enhanced when Colonel Winterscale, the secretary of the club, remarked that "If the Czar of Russia came to play, I suppose, Taylor, you would carry for him?" The annual visitors to Westward Ho! were also rare sources of revenue to us caddies, and I had my fair share. They would write down before coming asking if it were possible to engage the little white-haired caddie, and again I felt proud. The most famous golfer whose clubs I carried was Mr. Horace Hutchinson, whose home was near Westward Ho! and perhaps I may quote some kind words of his from "Fifty Years of Golf": "It was during my time at Oxford," he says, "that there came to Wellesbourne as 'odd boy'—that is to say, to do certain odd jobs in the morning—a little, singularly white-flaxen-haired boy from Northam village. . . . I do not know exactly what the duties of an 'odd boy' are, but you may be very certain that he performed them very efficiently when I tell you that his name was John Henry Taylor. He used to do those odd jobs, whatever they were, like a champion, I am very sure, and then he used to go down to the links and carry my clubs for me whenever I was at home." I was proud of carrying Mr. Hutchinson's clubs, and I was still prouder some years later when I encountered him in the annual team match between our Working Men's Club and the Royal North Devon. Probably he did not take the match very seriously, but, at any rate, I managed to win it by a couple of holes and was mightily encouraged accordingly.

However, I am going ahead too fast. At the moment I was acclaimed the best player among the caddies, and as caddies, as judges of the game, have no superiors, I am proud at the recollection, and I hope I have justified myself in their eyes. My old colleagues tell me that I have done so, and we had some good golfers among the boys of Northam in those days, the two Cawseys and Jack Rowe among them!

Just about the time I left caddying, at fifteen years of age, my dear father died, having, as the doctor said, literally worked himself to death, leaving mother with five



General S., a celebrated Indian warrior, gave us so thorough a talking to that I felt heartily ashamed of my conduct.

children to struggle for. I have been more than fortunate in my profession, but my one regret is that father did not live to see me become a champion golfer. He died before I could contribute anything towards his material comfort, but I am happy to believe that I never caused him any great worry. When he lay dying I happened to hear him, through the thin partition of the room, say something I shall always hold sacred, which justifies me in so thinking. After my father's death the sight and thought of my poor mother struggling along to keep the roof over our heads was a never-ending pang; I can scarce restrain my tears when I think about it, and I am not ashamed. Although she suffered from a weak back, and never could stand upright, she fought the world and its never-ending evil thrusts with pluck and fortitude and never asked for any quarter. But the bitterness of it all cut deep down in my soul and determined me, if I were given the strength, to prove worthy of her sacrifice. I went into service with Captain Blakeney as gardener's boy, and again I came under his beneficent influence. I must have left behind me on the links a good reputation, for when a few years later a vacancy on the ground staff was waiting to be filled I was sent for by the committee and the job was offered me. Providence was working towards its destined end, and I saw in this the shaping of it. I gladly and most thankfully accepted. I was again back among the putting greens and the bunkers that I had always loved, and even the most evil of bunkers has its lovable qualities! The opportunity as groundsman gave me the chance to consolidate my game, and between working hours a club was never out of my hands.

Just before I had taken up this work I had in fact become a professional golfer, not with the intention of becoming one regularly,

but by playing in a professional competition. This was in 1888, when the club held a big professional tournament to which came men of great renown from the North: the three Kirkaldys—Andrew, Hugh, and Jack—Willie Campbell, Archie Simpson, and others. I entered and got through one round successfully, beating Tom Kirk, but in the second I ran into Archie Simpson, then at his best, and duly went down. At one time in the match I held a short lead, but he beat me in the end. As it was by no more than three and two I was quite satisfied with my beginning.

Kindness and consideration were showered upon me by all the members, and I was more than happy. I was still learning that civility and a striving to do one's best are weapons that will inevitably overcome indifference and give to those that use them an overwhelming advantage in the race of life.

An opportunity for advancement came a year or so afterwards, when a new links was opened at Burnham, in Somerset, and another kind friend, the late Monseigneur C. H. Kennard, who was its first president, offered me the post of professional. The distance from a groundsman to professional bridged a great chasm, and I walked across with no little trepidation. I might be a decent greenkeeper, but I was not so sure of becoming even a tolerable professional. But I burnt my boats and took the chance, urged by my mother, who had boundless faith in me. Again I fell among friends, who gave me every encouragement to perfect my game and were good enough to predict that the brand of the game was good and only needed the chance of competition in order to reveal itself.

I steadfastly set before me as the goal of my ambition the winning of the championship, but as there is only one championship a year, I realized it was something of a forlorn hope. I was matched with Andrew Kirkaldy, who was then, in 1892, filling a temporary engagement at Winchester, and beat him. As "Andra" was at that time one of the world's greatest golfers, I realized that by winning I had set my foot on the long ladder that might enable me to climb to great heights. Of "Andra" I must say a short but none the less kindly word. He will go down into history as a rugged Scots character, full of quaint but forceful humour, and a game and dour fighter in many a tough match, but underneath the rough exterior there beats a kindly and gentle heart. He laid it bare to me on this great occasion of my life. I, an unknown English professional, had beaten him, and when walking off the last green toward the clubhouse he thrust his arm inside mine and, in no spirit of patronage, highly complimented me on the game that I had put up. It required a man—a sportsman—to do this, and I shall ever be grateful to "Andra" for this first glimpse of his great-heartedness. I was to experience more of it as the years went on.

Age 17.

Wearing his first prize—the scratch medal of the Northam Working Men's Golf Club.

I was now fairly launched on the turbulent seas of a professional golfer's life—turbulent, because its navigation is not easy, neither is it possible to escape the reefs of disappointment. I could see before me a life of moderate comfort, and, in contrast to my earlier struggles for a living, a degree of affluence in front of me, and I was determined nothing should be wanting on my part to secure both. Providence had given me a means of earning my living that was at once the most agreeable and best fitted to my ambition, and I should count myself a sorry knave if I abused it by unworthy conduct. Many men I saw did so, but this only made me the

more resolved not to err from the line of sobriety and to avoid anything debasing.

My lot was cast among gentlemen and gentlewomen, and common courtesy demanded that I should be worthy of their companionship.

I moved from Burnham to Winchester, and found myself in an atmosphere that was most congenial and stimulating. One cannot live in an old-world city like Winchester, with its noble cathedral and its wonderful college, without being filled with reverence. Many members of the teaching staff of the college became my firm friends. The Rev. "Dick" Richardson, the second master, the Rev. "Trant" Bramston, beloved by generations of old Wykehamists, and Mr. T. C. Rendle, lately retired from the head-mastership, Mr. "Teddy" Buckland, the old Oxford cricket and racquets Blue, were pupils of mine, and I tried to instil into their learned minds some of the principles of golf which I had gathered.

I, an unknown English professional, had beaten him, and when walking off the last green toward the clubhouse "Andra" thrust his arm inside mine and highly complimented me on the game I had put up.

I spent four most pleasant years at Winchester, and it was whilst there that I won my first championship at Sandwich, in 1894. I had entered first, in 1893, at Prestwick, and have grateful memories of the kindness of dear old Charlie Hunter, the grand old man of the Ayrshire course, to the unknown young man from the South. I played very well in my practice rounds, beating some good men, and kept up this form in my first round in the championship, which was a seventy-five, then considered something quite out of the common.

Perhaps I had played too hard in those practice rounds, or perhaps the sudden prominence was too much for me. At any rate, I faded away, and ended some way down the list, at the head of which was Willie Auchterlonie. Still, I had had my baptism of fire. Next year at Sandwich found me much steadier and inured to the strain. I managed to win with a score of three hundred and twenty-six. That may seem a high score for four rounds in these days, but Sandwich with a gutty ball was a severe course, with much hard hitting to be done with the wooden clubs.

It was to Winchester that I brought my wife from Devon in 1895. The man who has accepted the responsibility of founding a home leaves the days of his youth behind him, and must face the world with a fresh courage. The world has been kind to me, and I am thankful to it accordingly. There are millions of kindly folk in it, and it seems to me that I have met them all. Winchester gave me the further inspiration to go forward, to try and give my best in thought, word, and deed, for was it not William de Wykeham who said that "Manners makyth man"?

(Lord Desborough, Lord Riddell, and Dean Inge will be among early contributors to this series.)

A Life Policy

By

ROLAND PERTWEE

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

THIS is the story of an agent in an insurance company or an assurance company, for I don't know which is which, and, any way, it doesn't matter.

His name was Harold Parsons, and he was quite an ordinary young man—neither better nor worse than his fellows. He did not leave duty behind at the close of day, as do some men. He realized that the finest trade *coups* were often to be made when the world had its guard down and its napkin spread. At the hour for gin and bitters men become unwary and susceptible to specious argument. At the dinner table ladies are liable to discuss unhappy losses of jewellery, furs, and such. Motorists, passengers in trains, those contemplating adventurous travel by air, confronted with gloomy fears of possible disaster, found Harold Parsons the very fellow to consult. This energetic young man thought of everything and preached the letter of his thoughts to those who sought his counsel willingly—or heard it accidentally—and even to those who took pains to avoid hearing anything about it at all, and when he was not at business he talked business—and talked. In some walks of life this practice of carrying shop into the home is considered rather bad form. Not so in the insurance world—nor, for that matter, in the assurance world either.

Harold Parsons was an angel of the Corps of Safety First, a professor of precaution, a caretaker of the present and the future.

It will be readily appreciated that a young man with such unique opportunities for investigating the dangers that beset the individual paid more than usual heed to the safeguarding of his own belongings. To the limit of his purse he was covered in every direction. It was humanly impossible for anything to happen to him by which in some measure he would not benefit. His life was so planned that he could not lose.

And not only his life, but that of his wife as well. Mona was wired in with a completeness that left little to the imagination. Even quite trivial ailments to which she might be susceptible could not be contracted without profit; whereas more serious affections, as, for example, diphtheria, scarlet fever, and appendicitis—apart from pains and discomforts they might cause—were potential sources of wealth.

Neatly filed in a black japanned deed box at Harold's office was a bundle of policies mounting guard over the safety and well-being of his wife.

The only thing which it had never occurred to Harold to insure her against was a loss of affection for himself—a strange oversight, having regard to the fact that no one but himself was in a position to underwrite the risk with permanent hope of success.

It may be thought that Mona had every reason to be happy. So she had—but she wasn't. Married life was very different from what her expectations had led her to believe. She always had thought that having a husband would mean the possession of someone to whom one could talk—she did not realize that it actually meant having someone before whom she must sit in silence. Many women do not find out till too late that marriage is not so much an avenue for free speech as for enforced listening.

Harold Parsons was a capital example of a well-established male type. When he came home in the evenings he believed in telling his wife all he had said and done

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during the day. Also, he believed in discouraging her from doing likewise. It was improbable she would have anything of interest to impart. He often reflected that Mona was very lucky to hear all these jolly things. Lots of men told their wives nothing. Very lucky she was—a lucky girl—pretty, too—and that was because she was happy and knew that she was well looked after, and it couldn't matter a bit if she did have the influenza or a baby, because in either case the expenses would be defrayed by the Nottingham Widows' Special Endowment Insurance Society, Ltd.

It will now be seen that there was no room for any leakage in her appreciation. None, that is, that Harold could foretell. It required the subtler ingenuity of his wife to find one.

At the beginning of their married life Mona had watched Harold expand with interest. She was glad he was getting on in the world; but with the passage of time she could not help believing there existed in her a power to be much more amusing than he was—in short, to be capital company, the sort of girl anybody ought to be glad about. She felt there were astonishing accidentals in her nature which a discriminating person ought to be happy to encounter. At first, of course, Mona did not know what was really the matter with her—she did not realize that she was suffering from a complaint which can only be diagnosed as a suppressed sense of humour.

It was agonizing—this inhibited mirth—agonizing and unexplainable, for it nearly always arose at the most telling points of Harold's stories, those critical moments when clients' defence had been broken by argument and policies were thrust into their hands.

There could be nothing funny in that. It was very important that clients should succumb. Should they fail to do so, there would be no breakfast bacon. Harold's whole life was a statement of the seriousness of insurance. It would be insane, nay, more, criminal, to laugh at so grave a matter. No one who is not mentally unsound would dream of laughing at his or her bread and butter.

And with that sober reflection came the stabbing pain again and the question, "Why not?" There was a splendid insolence in the idea. To point at a cottage loaf and a pat of butter and hold one's sides and rock with laughter over them—why, that would be a marvellous thing to do—a noble complex to cultivate! With sudden intuition Mona saw that not to laugh at one's bread and butter was the act of a hog and a vulgarian. The serious things of life were not served up on a bread-trencher or shrewdly won in City office and at street corner—those were the funny things—the comic necessities of existence. The serious things were the making of life itself—the free elements—the intercourse of thoughts—partnership of spirits—the vasty spaces of sky and sea—the great unplumbed urns of mirth—and the call and answer of one soul to another in simple ordinary ways.

NOW when the realization of all this took possession of Mona she was shaken by an emotion even greater than the emotion laughter withheld.

She saw with appalling clarity that, in spite of the infinite precautions which fenced her matrimonial paths, she and Harold did not share a single thought or impulse in common. They had been married three years—long enough for her to stand aside and take stock squarely. The novelty of marriage had worn off—the adventure was over; there remained only the burning question, "Was there that in him and that in her to make a continuance of their life together an agreeable or even a tolerable arrangement?"

Neither he nor she were creatures of passion. They were ordinary mortals, blowing neither hot nor cold. But like ordinary mortals they stood in need of diversion, entertainment, or whatever you like to call it. Harold, thanks to work and the esteem in which he held himself, was contented with his lot. Life to him was a simple transaction and quite jolly if one possessed the wit to see one's own jokes. For Harold had a finely-developed sense of jokes, and if he did not always make them himself he imported them from the Stock Exchange, which was just as bad. In his more beamish moods he would shoot off a few at Mona, who almost sank beneath them. For Mona's sense of humour was of another and a far more poignant kind. Anything absurd shone out like a star; but, as everyone knows, stars are not made for one person to look at, but for two, and these two must be close together in a happy mingling of intimacy and understanding. And that intimacy did not exist.

It was revealed, therefore, that she and her husband were poles apart, and with that knowledge there shivered through Mona a sensation of positive repulsion. If there were no marriage of mind there could be no marriage of bodies. It was indecent, unthinkable, to share a room with a man with whom one could not in honesty share a laugh. It was worse than slavery. Mona did not resent Harold's calling—it was as good as any other. It was his narrow belief in the importance of it that rasped every nerve in her system. It was her

utter inability to escape from the insurance agent into the arms of the man that shattered every ideal.

If only every now and then she could see his tongue in his cheek instead of his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat there would be excuse to hope. But that never happened, and because it never happened she knew that she was wedded to a puffed-up, self-sufficient young man who in the march of the onward years would develop into a bundle of bounce and brag of an order too terrible to contemplate.

IT was Mona's birthday when the storm broke. Unlike many men, Harold had not forgotten his duty. He brought home with him a present that few would have had the ingenuity to think of. The present was a policy to protect her against the growing peril of botulism, a disease which at that time was making rapid strides toward popularity. But this was not all. The brokers were generous men who believed in the old principle of the baker's dozen. They had thrown in as a make-weight a safeguard against sleeping sickness and spino-cerebral meningitis.

"There you are, darling," said Harold, kissing the long envelope and placing it in her hand. "There isn't one in a thousand chance that you'll be victim to any of 'em, but if you are—well, there you are!" He put his arms round her neck and pecked at her ear.

Mona opened the thick folded paper and read :—

"Botulism, sleeping sickness, and cerebral spinal meningitis."

"That's the three."

He looked at her gaily and she at him, and then she broke out in a great gust of laughter. He stood away and stared at her in frowning perplexity.

"Oh, my blessed darling!" she cried. "I've been worrying about you so, and it was there all the time."

"There! What was there?"

"Fun—seeing how ridiculous it all was. It's a lovely joke, Harold, a perfect joke."

"I don't see any joke," he replied, soberly.

"You—don't—see——" She stopped, and the laughter died out of her eyes. She said very distinctly, "How perfectly awful!"

Harold crossed the room and sat, with dignity, in a very small chair.

"If you don't like my present," he said, "better let me have it back. There won't be much surrender value, but I may as well collar what there is. Dash it, Mona—can't think what's come to you."

Something in his words stirred her imagination.

"Surrender value! I wonder if you've the remotest idea what that means?"

"Look here, Mona, you can't be well."

"Oh, yes, I am. The me you know is as well as can be, but I was thinking."

"About what?"

"The mistakes people can make in their life's policy."

"Dear old thing," he protested, "that's rather an intricate subject for you to handle."

"Oh, very," she agreed, "terribly. How many women, I wonder, realize when they take out a whole life how small their surrender value is likely to be?"

"It's not like you, Mona, to talk this way."

"It's not like me to talk at all. That's why, now I've started, I find it easy to go on."

Rather brusquely he returned :—

"I shouldn't. You'll only say a lot of things you don't mean."

She shook her head.

"No—the danger is saying the things I do mean."

"I believe you wanted gloves," he said. "I believe you said you wanted gloves. If so, I'm sorry. I thought you'd appreciate something more lasting."

Her reply was inconsequent.

"Gloves may come and gloves may go, but botulism goes on for ever."

"That's silly and rather offensive," said he.

"Perhaps, but it's rather funny, too."

He replied :—

"You seem to find a lot of humour in things to-night. Personally I can't laugh at the same jokes."

"That's because you can't laugh at yourself."

He rose angrily.

"Damn it! there's nothing funny in me."

She answered :—

"There is—there must be."

"It's taken you a long time to find it out."

She nodded.

"Three years."

"Look here, old girl," he said, with a heavy hand upon her shoulder. "If anything has put you out, say what it is."

"Shall I?"

"Go ahead! I've had a pretty trying afternoon roping in an actress for a special endowment with the Nottingham Widows. Matter of truth, I've had nearly as much temperament as I can do with. However, if you've a complaint, I'll listen."

He arranged himself, elbow on mantelpiece, ready to dispose of any argument. He was quite a good-looking fellow—a decent, presentable fellow, but, oh, so smug—so sure of himself, so confident of being able to deal with the situation.

"My complaint is against you," said Mona, very slowly, for there is plenty of time in disputes between married couples.

"Go on," said Harold. "I'll deal with your charges alphabetically when you've finished framing them."

"A," said Mona. "A complaint against myself is obviously without foundation. B. I have no intention of justifying my actions to anyone. C. You are clearly out of sorts and need a tonic."

It was an admirable piece of mimicry, to which cause is to be attributed the deep frown which gathered on his handsome brow. At the sight of the frown once again that agonizing, suppressed mirth drove a javelin through Mona's side.

"Oh, relax!" she implored, "for Heaven's sake relax! Just think what life is for me with a face like that to look at! Can't you laugh? It would be easy enough if only you'd laugh. Here, look at this." She held up the policy he had brought home. "Laugh at this, Hal. Think it over—you can't fail to—think of your state of mind when you got this for me—this and the rest of them with and without profits. Harold, darling, ask yourself, it must, must be funny!"

"I am waiting to hear your complaint," he said.

She became instantly serious. The man was a pachyderm—there was no reaching his funny bone through that thick hide.

"I have none," she said; "it isn't worth while. We think in different terms, I'm afraid."

"If this is thought, preserve me from it!" said he.

"That is exactly what I mean to do. Harold, I've deceived you for the three years of our marriage—deceived you disgracefully. I know it wasn't fair, but you

rather overwhelmed me Besides, I liked you, and it's taken me a long time to struggle through."

"Through what?"

"A conventional idea and back to myself. Harold, I'm not a good life."

"Not—a good——"

"Oh, I don't mean I'm not a good wife—I mean simply what I say. I'm a bad investment. As a sinking fund I'm through. It only remains to find out what my surrender value is worth."

He caught her shoulder.

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know. Probably to make myself thoroughly ill and draw six pounds a week compensation."

"Mona," he cried, "Mona, this is absurd."

She looked at him with a quick gleam of hope.

"It's a lovely joke, Harold, a perfect joke."

"I don't see any joke," he replied, soberly.

"I mean," he said, "it's atrocious, abominable."

She twisted from his grasp.

"It's no good trying to stop me," she said, "because I mean to go; although," she added, "I'm glad you don't want me to."

"You'd better go upstairs and lie down. I imagine you'll come to your senses before long."

"I have," she retorted; "that's why this has happened."

He stood frowning—saying nothing.

Mona moved to the door and lingered a moment, swinging it to and fro between her hands.

"Doesn't it strike you as funny," she asked, tentatively; "funny that I should go off like this? Don't you think it's a funny reason?"

"Go upstairs," he repeated.

Mona passed out of the house as quietly as a mouse. She hailed a taxi at the corner of the street and snuggled into a dark corner—just such a corner where the companionship of laughter would have been ideal. But, queerly enough, she had no inclination to laugh. In that dim gloom the motive of her flight did not seem very funny after all. It seemed rather shoddy—rather shabby. There was no particular sense of freedom—no particular sense of elation.

"After all," she reflected, "the surrender value of a life policy is only about two-thirds."

Harold Parsons went to his work next day in a dark and ominous frame of mind. It was a pity, for he had a most reluctant customer to deal with, a man who up to the

present had successfully resisted his most rhetorical importunities.

He stumbled into the man's office without a vestige of his accustomed bounce, accepted a chair, began to speak, lost the thread of his second sentence, and stared dismally out of the window.

"Well," said the man, "is that all?"

Harold turned irritably.

"You know as much about the thing as I do. If you want it, take it—if not I'll go."

"Hullo, hullo!" was the surprised rejoinder; "this is something new. The usual trouble with you insurance fellows is, you never give anyone time to breathe. You create opposition by argument."

"Oh, go to the devil!" said Harold, and made for the door.

"Easy—easy. Invective is no way of doing business. Your firm won't thank you for losing my custom through calling me names."

"Your custom isn't so important to me as all that," Harold retorted. "There are things in life a lot more important than your custom."

The man, who was big and bearded and shrewd, looked at Harold approvingly.

"That's true enough," he admitted, "but you've never before given me a notion that you thought so. It was the appalling gravity of your appeals that put my back up and set my teeth on edge. Of course, money talks, but too much talk about money is apt to make us forget other and more vital matters. However, as you're a fellow with an idea of proportion and a sense of humour, you can leave those papers on my desk and I'll look 'em over."

"What do you mean by proportion—sense of humour?" Harold demanded.

The big, bearded man scratched himself and stretched his legs.

"Proportion, as I see it, is judging how high this is against that. A sense of humour, as I see it, is knowing pretty accurately how big an ass one's making of oneself."

"H'm! How's one to know if one has them or not?"

"The judgment-seat is a man's breakfast table."

"How do you mean?"

"Assuming he's married."

Harold pulled up a chair and sat down. He was interested. The other proceeded:—

"It's the women, of course, who have the divine sense of humour—which is natural since they have such astounding opportunities to cultivate it."

"Eh?"

"Their husbands!—an immense field. Just think how stupendously funny the average husband must be to the average wife."

"That's why marriage is such a success, I suppose?" said Harold, bitterly.

"No; it's why so often it's such a rotten failure. Women are queer cattle and they don't feed on staple diet, but they must have something to amuse 'em. You're a youngster and I'm assuming you're unmarried."

"Go on," said Harold.

"If ever you do marry, take my advice—buy a cheval glass for your wife and from time to time look into it over her shoulder. It's the best way of seeing your two faces side by side and judging if one is a complement to the other and how much you've got in common. But when you make the experiment take care it's her face and not yours you look at. Leave the looking at you to her."

"Sounds like a lot of rubbish to me," said Harold.

"It may, but it isn't. Most marriages are a failure because men spend too much time looking at themselves, and it's an odd thing, if once you contract that habit, it's devilish hard to rid yourself of it. The more you look the better pleased you'll be. The mirror marks a fundamental distinction between the sexes, for whereas a man looks into it for his own personal satisfaction, a woman looks into it for the satisfaction she's likely to give others."

HAROLD rose and moved to the door. Arrived, he turned.

"Why have you shot all that stuff at me?" he asked.

The big man chuckled.

"Damn it, Parsons, you earned it for the way you've bored me other times we've met."

"But I'm not a bore," said Harold, and added, "Am I?"

"I only know you in a business sense."

"Well, I flatter myself I'm the same to everybody in business and out of it."

The big man ran fingers through his hair.

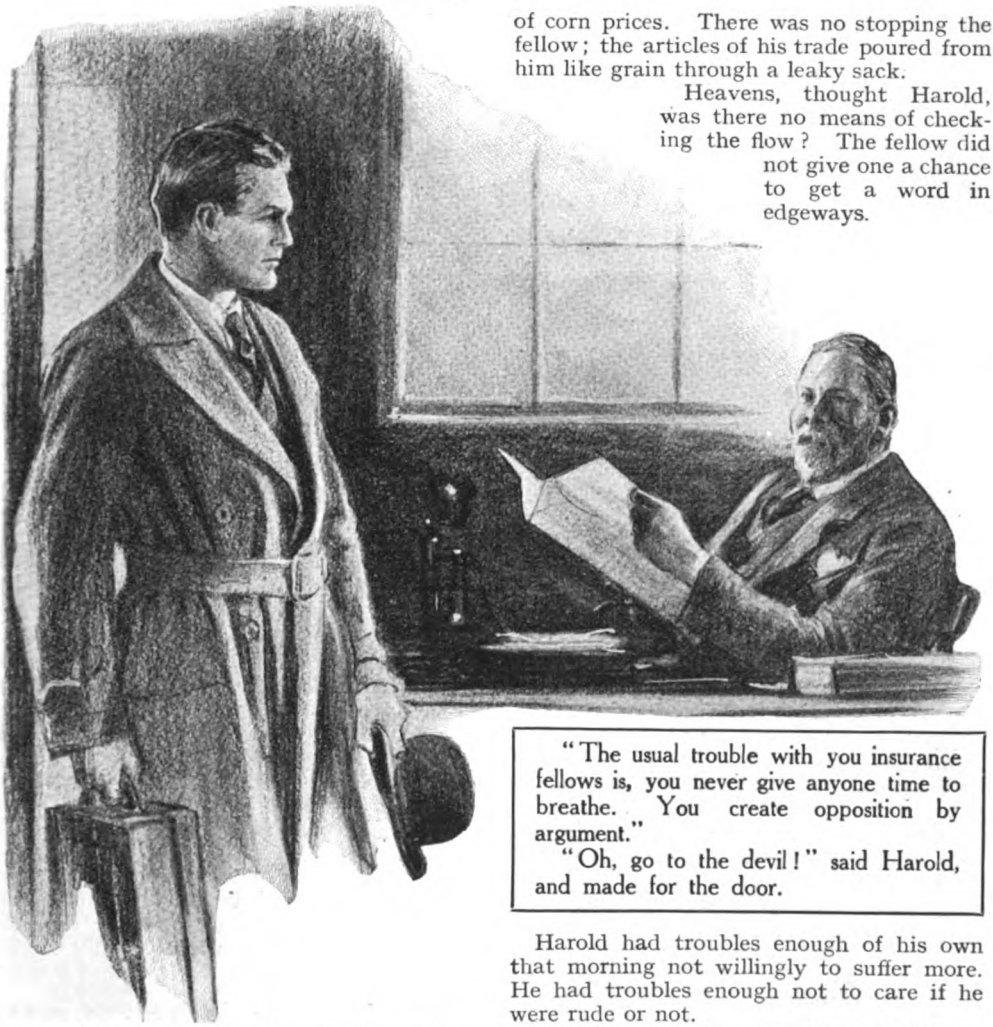
"Oh, my stars!" said he.

"Which means I *am* a bore."

"N-no, it merely means that I shouldn't be in too much of a hurry to get married—or, on the other hand, perhaps I should."

"D'you know," said Harold, "that strikes me as rather funny—I can't think why."

Harold went out with a sure conviction that he had made a grave mistake in attempting to do business that day. His mind was too distraught as the result of a sleepless night and an uneaten breakfast for sober and sensible dealing. He should never have taken the risk, for behold, instead of appearing before a potential customer as a person of geniality, jocosity, and sound, well-balanced argument, he had proved himself an ordinary frail mortal with an uncontrolled temper and a sense of



personal grievance. But this notwithstanding, he had enjoyed the tall, bearded man's talk, and even enjoyed the rough digs that had been made at him. In some ways there seemed an affinity between what Mona and this man had said.

Both, he was sure, regarded him as a good fellow, but at the same time they accused him of being a joke. Well, there was no harm in that—for he was a joke—at least he was a purveyor and hander-on of jokes. That, perhaps, wasn't quite the same. They were laughing at him rather than at his drolleries. But why? His head began to spin. Surely there was nothing ludicrous in a man absorbing himself in his work. Surely that was most creditable.

At the corner of Fenchurch Street he was stopped by an acquaintance who was employed on the Baltic Exchange. Began a distressing discourse on the technicality of corn prices. There was no stopping the fellow; the articles of his trade poured from him like grain through a leaky sack.

Heavens, thought Harold, was there no means of checking the flow? The fellow did not give one a chance to get a word in edgeways.

"The usual trouble with you insurance fellows is, you never give anyone time to breathe. You create opposition by argument."

"Oh, go to the devil!" said Harold, and made for the door.

Harold had troubles enough of his own that morning not willingly to suffer more. He had troubles enough not to care if he were rude or not.

"I suppose," he said, "you only eat bread, old chap?"

The Baltic enthusiast looked at him in surprise. Harold went on:—

"Do you never give it a rest?"

"Give what a rest?"

"Corn. When you get back at night does your wife have to go through all this?"

"I thought," came the slow and awful reply, "I thought you knew that my wife and I no longer live together."

"I'm most terribly sorry," said Harold, and gave the Baltic elbow a squeeze. "I'd clean forgotten. It was some other chap, wasn't it?"

"No," came the hot rejoinder. "Nothing of the kind. We agreed to separate—that is, well, you know what women are—I found she'd gone, that's all."

"Without a reason?"

"I never gave her a reason."

" I didn't mean to introduce the subject," said Harold, " but it seems odd a woman should behave like that."

" Odd ? I should think so. It was a lesson to me, though."

" In what way ? "

" Never to try and amuse a woman again."

" You used to amuse her ? "

" I treated her just as I'd treat a man. I told her every damn thing I'd done. Oughtn't that to be enough ? "

Harold nodded sympathetically. In a bright flash he reconstructed a dinner-table dialogue between this parted twain.

" White Karachi dropped five-sixteenths at noon to-day—might be worth buying for a rise."

And his wife's " Yes—did it ? "

How different from his own racy recitals to Mona—how different! How—exactly alike!

Suddenly Harold asked :—

" Was she laughing when she left you ? "

" Who told you that ? " came the quick retort.

Harold bolted.

Arrived at his office he opened the black deed-box and took from within the policies drawn up in favour of his wife. It was a formidable bundle. He spent an hour going through them. Not one covered him against the emergency in which he found himself. This being so, it was clearly evident they were useless and would be better burnt. But Harold's business instinct rebelled against the idea of burning papers which represented a considerable sum of invested capital. Accordingly he jotted down the individual value of each and posted them, for immediate surrender, to the various companies with whom they were contracted.

" And now," said he, " what am I going to do with this money ? "

For a long while he pondered, rapping his lower teeth with the vulcanite cap of a fountain pen. Presently he got up, took his hat from the peg, and went out to visit a firm of brokers who would insure anything from a battleship to a golf-ball.

" But it's unheard of," said the representative. " Rank folly, my dear Parsons. No firm is going to accept a risk like that unless you pay a fantastic premium."

" Are you prepared to do it ? "

" We'll do anything on terms—but modern life being what it is you're humanly certain to lose."

" I'll take a chance."

Some calculations were made and the result handed to Harold for inspection.

" It's the best we can offer. Let's see. You've been married three years already, and it's unreasonable to suppose you'll pass another three or four without putting in a claim. I'm not at all sure the transaction isn't highly immoral. It's a definite incentive to divorce."

" I'm looking at it the other way," said Harold. " Your terms are outrageous, of course, but I don't complain, and since you're on something for nothing I don't see why you should complain either. Have the policy sent along to my office this afternoon."

" You're determined, then ? "

" Quite. I'm entitled to protect myself if I want to."

" But you're protecting your wife."

" You miss the point," said Harold.

Then he went out and bought a cheval glass.

WHEN she left home, Mona Parsons drove to the Queen's Palace Hotel and booked a room. She was not the sort of girl to regard her mother as a sanctuary for the conjugally parted. She was by no means satisfied that her mother would welcome her return for such an eccentric cause. The old lady, having married off her children and interred her husband, was making agreeable use of her second childhood by living at a bridge club. Any interference in this spirited routine would naturally cause her indignation and distress. Mona decided, therefore, that she would be better on her own.

Of course, she had little or no experience of being on her own, and after extracting what pleasure she might from having hot and cold water running in a basin in her room and by looking through the window at the illuminated signs in Piccadilly Circus she found that being on her own was a trifle overrated.

Of course, the privacy of her apartment afforded a capital opportunity for unrestrained mirth at husbands and their ways, but just then she could think of nothing funny, and the impulse she had so long subdued showed no disposition to vent itself in explosions of gaiety. She reflected that this was just as well, because loud and prolonged laughter coming from a room known to be occupied by a single individual is apt to engender the belief among guests and chambermaids that a lunatic is abroad.

Laughter being thus ruled out of court, Mona stretched herself on the bed and snivelled a bit instead and felt miserable and badly used. She wondered why she worried such a lot that Harold was not all she had wanted him to be. Logic supplied the answer that it was because she was fond of him. Well, of course she was fond of him, but that did not excuse him for being such a dunderhead. It made his sins

all the blacker. There grew in her mind a realization that comes to all of us sooner or later, that it is only those to whom we are deeply attached that we can so poignantly detest. Harold was all right—but he was so pompous and inflated—he was such an awful bore. Because he was a man he had never allowed her the privilege of boring him back—of reprisal borings. That is what she should have done—or she should have flung a dinner-plate at his head—instead of laughing at him up her sleeve and bolting like a thief in the night, and kidding herself that her flight was a flight of humour! It was nothing of the kind—it was just a jolly caddish shirking of responsibility. Not the responsibility to see that his meals were served punctually and to his taste, but to bump his head against the wall until such a time as some sense was knocked into it. And thinking of that, why hadn't he given her a good shaking when she told him she was going away, instead of standing there like a great oaf and repeating "Go upstairs—go upstairs," as if she would behave better on another landing?

A twist—and that idea gave Mona a sudden dig in the ribs, and out shot a laugh like a crash of broken glass.

Oh, dear, how funny husbands were! But now technically she had no husband. So the laugh died.

Awful thought. For development of a sense of humour she had fled from the source of its inspiration. She had left a husband because he could not enter into her conception of what was absurd, and had wilfully secluded herself into a form of existence where nothing was absurd except her own actions.

"What am I going to do-o-oo?" wailed Mona, addressing an ormolu light fixture. "The longer I stop here the bigger idiot I shall feel."

It is possible she would have returned home then and there had not the only pair of walking shoes she had brought with her been carried off to those distant regions where numbers are chalked on their soles in solemn testimony that they are supposed to have been cleaned.

So there was nothing for it but to go to bed, and this she did, and felt far more ashamed of being there alone than she had felt the night before of sharing a room with a man who failed to realize how funny he was.

IT was nerves that kept Mona meandering about the West-end for the better part of the next day—nerves and a growing sense of loneliness and guilt.

The night passed away from home seemed to surround her with shame and put her beyond the reach of *rapprochement*. She found herself wondering how Harold had got on for his breakfast. The two servants they kept were competent enough, but they needed an "eye."

And what about orders? Who could say that a dinner would be prepared? It is one thing to leave a man, but one must not starve him into the bargain. Then, again, would the house be properly kept? Under her management it was always spick-and-span; denied her management it might be spick, but it would certainly not be span.

Mona giggled at that because it was just the sort of joke that Harold could never see.

Came then an irresistible desire to be present when Harold didn't see something. She remembered with delight the failure she had had with him over the dachshund story—the dog whose legs were so short that they barely reached the ground.

Next minute Mona was in a taxi speeding homeward.

She arrived on the doorstep at the precise moment that Harold dragged wearily round the corner from the Tube station. Everything about him was dejected—even his hat was straight instead of at the jaunty angle he always affected. At the sight of Mona he stopped short—then came forward again quicker.

It was going to be frightfully difficult, so she said:—

"I haven't the latch-key. I didn't know I'd want it."

Harold was looking at her, and he tried to open the front door with the key of the deed-box.

"Bouff!" exploded Mona, without the slightest effort to restrain herself.

Harold looked at her, then at the key—grinned a bit, rectified his mistake, and opened the door for her.

"May I?" she queried, hesitating. I mean, d'you want me to?"

"Oh, go in," said he; "get inside, don't be such a silly ass, Mona."

The informal speech had a warmth and geniality she had scarcely expected.

In the hall Mona pulled off her hat and gloves and threw them on a chair, and turned into the dining-room.

Thither he followed her and closed the door.

"I *am* sorry," she said. "Really, Harold—deep down sorry. Something snapped in me—and—well, go on, tick me off." Woman-like she added: "Of course, it was your fault too."

"I know that," he retorted.

She shook her head.

"Oh, yes, I do. Among other things it was that present of mine."

She turned away to hide disappointment. Something in his attitude on the doorstep had led her to hope for better things.

"Why did you come back, Mona?"

She lifted her shoulders.

"I found out the surrender value of a wife is how much her loss means to her husband."

Harold nodded.

"Most emergencies are covered in insurance terms," he agreed. "By the way, I surrendered this afternoon all the policies made out in your favour, Mona."

"I *am* sorry," she said. "Really, Harold—deep down sorry. Go on, tick me off." Womanlike she added: "Of course, it was your fault too."

She looked up with a flash.

"You didn't lose much time. Then I suppose you thought I shouldn't come back?"

"No. I wanted to provide against an eventuality in case you did. Here, put this away somewhere."

He handed her a long envelope.

"What's this?"

"Read it if you like."

Mona opened the envelope, and inside was a policy assuring her of an adequate income in the event of her husband boring her so much that she was no longer able to live beneath the same roof with him.

She read it over twice before fully comprehending its meaning. At the second reading her free hand went to her face and the fingers pressed against her mouth—hard—hard. It was not laughter she sought to check.

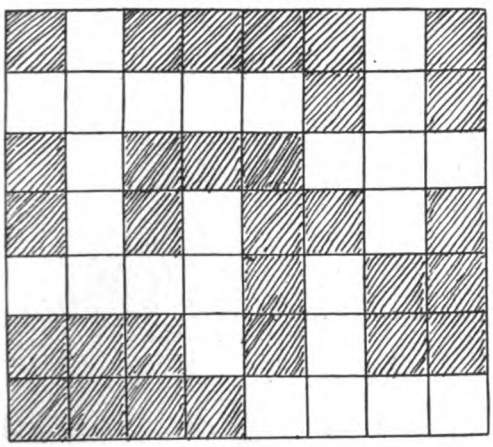
"But dash it, dear," said Harold, in genuine concern. "You can't feel that way about it—why, it must be funny—it must be."

Then somehow her face came to be buried in his shoulder and his arms were round her—a protection, as it were, against "all risks."

PERPLEXITIES.

— By —
HENRY E. DUDENEY.

748.—ANOTHER CROSS-WORD CURIOSITY.



THE point of this little variation of the cross-word idea is that every one of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet is used once and only once. Again I give the definitions, but do not indicate the locations of the words or their direction, horizontal or vertical. DEFINITIONS. — A metal. Parts of trees. To annoy. Whim or imagination. A sign, example. What person or persons. A man's shortened Christian name. To puzzle or make sport of.

749.—A MATCH-BOARDING ORDER.

A MAN gave an order for 297 feet of match-boarding of usual width and thickness. There were to be sixteen pieces, all measuring an exact number of feet—no fractions of a foot. He required 8 pieces of the greatest length, the remaining pieces to be one foot, two feet, or three feet shorter than the greatest length. How was the order carried out? Supposing the 8 of greatest length were 15 feet long, then the others must be made up of pieces of 14ft., 13ft., or 12ft. lengths, though every one of these three lengths need not be represented.

750.—AN ENIGMA.

PRONOUNCED as one letter, and written with three,
Two letters there are, and two only in me;
I'm double, I'm single, I'm black, blue, and grey,
I'm read from both ends, and the same either way.

751.—MISSING WORDS.

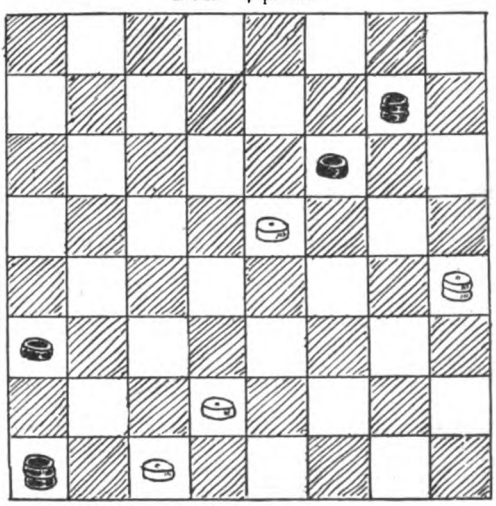
MARY sat with . . . . . in hand,
Writing . . . . . dramatic.
Did she . . . . . the plots she planned?
Negative emphatic!
. . . . . to us the . . . . . may be,
But at . . . . . they're new to she!

The six missing words (one repeated) all contain the same five letters.

752.—EASY DRAUGHTS.

I SUPPOSE ninety-nine out of a hundred persons will tell you that they can play draughts, which generally means that they are acquainted with the simple moves of the game and very little else. As a test I sometimes give the simple position shown in our

Black—4 pieces.

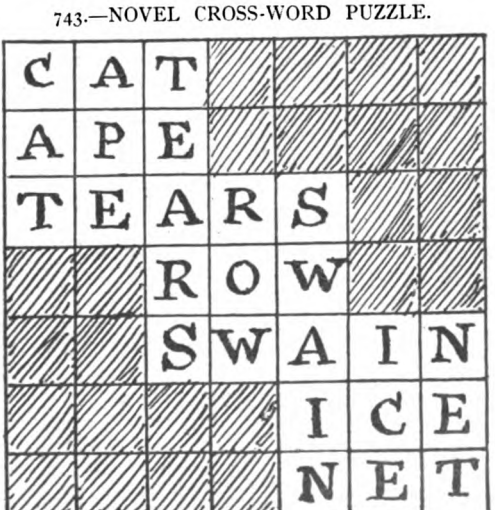


White—4 pieces.
White to move and win.

diagram. The experienced player will smile and give the solution right away, but it is amusing to see the bewilderment of the novice. And yet every serious beginner should very soon find the correct answer.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

743.—NOVEL CROSS-WORD PUZZLE.



THE point of this puzzle is that every word appears twice, under two totally different definitions. This is not suspected until the solver has made some little progress in his selection of likely words; then the thing becomes quite easy.

744.—EXPLORING THE DESERT.

THE nine men, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, J, all go 40 miles together on the 1 gal. in their engine tanks, when A transfers 1 gal. to each of the other eight and has 1 gal. left to return home. The eight go another 40 miles, when B transfers 1 gal. to each of the other seven and has 2 gals. to take him home. The seven go another 40 miles, when C transfers 1 gal. to each of the six others and returns home on the remaining 3 gals. The six go another 40 miles, when D gives each of five 1 gal. and returns home. The five go 40 miles, when E gives each of four 1 gal. and returns home. The four go another 40 miles, when F gives each of three 1 gal. and returns home. The three go 40 miles, when G gives each of two 1 gal. and returns home. The two go 40 miles, when H gives 1 gal. to J and returns home. Finally, the last man, J, goes another 40 miles and then has 9 gals. to take him home. Thus J has gone 360 miles out and home, the greatest distance in a straight line that could be reached under the conditions.

745.—CRYPTIC VERSE.

THE correct reading is :—

You sigh for a cipher, but I sigh for thee.
O sigh for no cipher, but O sigh for me.
Let not my sigh for a cipher go,
But give sigh for sigh, for I sigh for thee so

746.—LAMP SIGNALS.

WITH 3 red lamps, or 3 white lamps, or 3 gree lamps, we can make 15 patterns each (45). With red and 2 white we can make the same 15, and eac way will admit of 3 variations of colour order, 45 all. This is the same with 1 red and 2 green, 1 whi and 2 red, 1 white and 2 green, 1 green and 2 whit and 1 green and 2 red (270). With 1 red, 1 whit and 1 green we can get 6 by 15 variations (90 With 2 red, or 2 white, or 2 green, we can get 7 patter (21). With 1 red and 1 white, or 1 red and 1 gree or 1 white and 1 green we can get 14 variations eac (42). With 1 lamp only we can only get 1 sign each (3). Add together the numbers in bracke (45, 270, 90, 21, 42, and 3) and we get the corre answer, 471 ways.

747.—AN OLD CHARADE.

MATRIMONY (MAT—RYE—MONEY)

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 142.

(The Second of the Series.)

APRIL'S rains have had their day;
Welcome we the buds of May.

1. Breaks in might the roaring wave;
   Change one letter, 'tis a slave.
2. Flora's daughter, blue her dress,
   Half we jug and half we press.
3. Please perform, a bishop's name.
   Either way it is the same.
4. Sill and glass and sash and blind,
   All will bring the word to mind.
5. Fit for food is what we need:
   Rearrange the word, I bleed.
6. Lawns and gravel feel its weight,
   'Tis connected with a skate.
7. Upright here is seen again,
   Choose the one that tells of rain.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 142 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on May 12th.

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 141

Two English poets here we show,
They lived and died long years ago.
In one the Pilgrims' tales are seen,
In one we meet the Faerie Queene.

1. An island seaport here we seek;
   Let kine suggest regatta week.
2. The camel's back it may adorn,
   But men who get it feel forlorn.
3. Where Justice tries full many a case,
   A donkey takes the leading place.
4. He fought, and failed to win the crown
   The Lion beat him round the town.
5. This annual event, when here,
   Should be attended by good cheer.
6. I give to you, you give to me:
   If fair, there is no robbery.
7. Now recollect, recall to mind,
   A rhyme for wintry month we find.

REMUS.

1. C	owe	S
2. H	um	P
3. A	ssiz	E
4. U	nicor	N
5. C	hristma	S
6. E	xchang	E
7. R	ememb	R

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desi answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclo a stamped addressed envelope, and he will endeavour reply.

WHITSUN HOLIDAY NUMBER

JUN 17 1925

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

JEROME K. JEROME
ARNOLD BENNETT
SIR LANDON RONALD
E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

He says "Good-night" with a "Morning" Smile

and gets up with a "morning" heart — he eats HOVIS. Let HOVIS put a smile into your daily routine. It supplies the essential organic phosphates and nitrogenous body-building elements in an easily assimilated form.

You'll like its crisp delicious flavour, too.

KEEP WELL-NOURISHED ON

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You *can't* get wet in the

"29/6 *(Regd.)* Mattamac"

Feather Weight STORMPROOF

Without any qualification whatever, "Mattamac" Stormproofs are the best Coats of their kind in the World and, **under the 1925 price reductions,** are easily the best Coat-value procurable to-day.

A "Mattamac" is identical in appearance with the usual five-guinea Weatherproof. In utility, also, it equals its much-more-costly competitor. It wears as long, weighs one third, and is ABSOLUTELY WATERPROOF. Though light and compact-folding, the "Mattamac" is Wind and Chill proof as well as Wet proof. You may own several outdoor Coats and *still* have need for this handiest Coat of all. Don't risk disappointment with an imitation. Get the *genuine* which is labelled "Mattamac" under the coat-hanger.

29/6

For Ladies and Men.

"Matta" Fabric is exceedingly compact. The Coat worn by the 6ft. man beneath, when folded, just made this handful. *This is drawn from an actual photo of his hand and the "Mattamac" he wears, folded to fit snugly into his jacket pocket.*

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For Ladies and Men.

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These are direct Drawings from photos of Stock "Mattamac" Stormproofs

MADE FOR EVERY OUTDOOR PURPOSE

Town and Country Unbelted Models, **29/6**; Belted Models **32/6**; in 7 shades and 40 sizes (no extra charge for largest sizes). Made entirely from the genuine "Matta" (Regd.) Fabric, with adjustable wind-cuffs, perpendicular pockets, lined shoulders, Raglan sleeves, roomy "under-arms," and the famous cut of Conduit St., London, W.

"MATTAMAC" ART BOOKLET POST FREE

illustrating 11 Models. A p.c. brings Booklet and colour Patterns

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You buy without risk. Send chest measurement over waistcoat (Ladies measure over blouse), height and remittance, stating colour, and your "Mattamac" will be sent post free British Isles (extra abroad). If you are not fully satisfied you can return it within 7 days of receipt and get your money back in full. "Mattamac" Stormproofs are *only* obtainable from the "Mattamac" Showrooms and Branches, from our accredited Provincial Agents and by post from the Conduit St. Headquarters. If unable personally to inspect Models, send order with remittance or write to Pearson Bros., for the "Mattamac" Booklet 26 Q.

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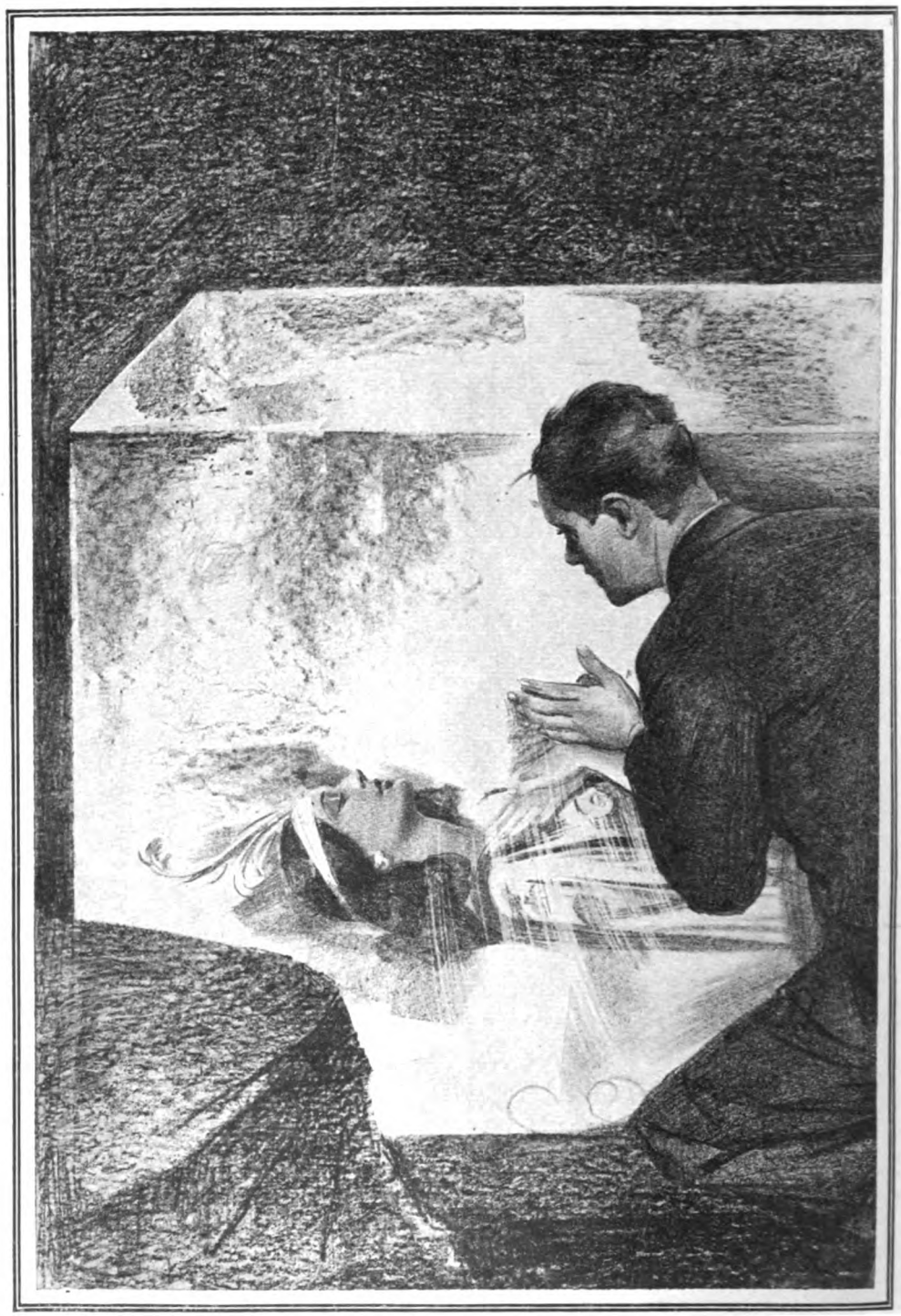
400 PROVINCIAL AGENCIES HAVE AMPLE STOCKS

JUNE, 1925.



"SHE'S NOT DEAD!" CRIED PRITCHARD. "SEE, HER EYES ARE OPENING! SHE'S SMILING!"

(*See page 539.*)

THE ISLAND UNDER SEA

By

C. E. BECHHOFER ROBERTS

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

This story is written in collaboration with a well-known Professor of Science, so the reader may rest assured that nothing is related that could not actually have happened.

"OH, look! Isn't he funny?"

A girl in front of me clutched her companion's arm. They both stared across the street and giggled. Other people, too, turned their heads in that direction, and I involuntarily followed their example.

On the opposite pavement was the man who had attracted their attention. Short, broad in the shoulder, and rather inclined to stoutness, he was hurrying along with an odd gait something between a hop and a skip. He was dressed in a beautifully-cut grey frock-coat, with a bright flower in the buttonhole, and sponge-bag trousers. A mass of flaming red hair was topped by a silk hat of unusual shape, and in his hand he flourished an elegant Malacca cane, as if parrying the blows of an invisible adversary.

I wondered what the smiling crowd would have said had they realized that he was no less a person than Arnold Bigelow Cooperthwaite Hawkes—"A. B. C." Hawkes, as he was known to those friends who did not share his parents' admiration of the Christian names that proclaimed his decent Yorkshire ancestry.

Thanks to the Press he would have been familiar to most of them as the scientist whose multifarious inventions, ranging from tanks and time-fuses to gas-masks and appliances for detecting hostile submarines, had made the difference between defeat and victory for our arms in the war. Despite his natural shrinking from publicity and the attempts of half-a-dozen politicians to claim the merit of his work, A. B. C. Hawkes had found it impossible to remain altogether in the background. In the scientific world, to be sure, he was world-famous for his great researches in physics, chemistry, and even some spheres of biology—so extensive were his attainments.

But the public did not know him by sight. No doubt they pictured him as the typical scientist of caricature, a grey-haired, elderly pedant, bent-shouldered, absent-minded, and selfish, with weak eyes, bad manners, and no interests outside his special work.

Actually just the opposite was the case. Despite the premature stoutness which he tried in vain to check by Turkish baths and every kind of patent exerciser, he was only thirty-six at the time of which I speak. His round, rosy face, snub nose, gay blue eyes, and vivacious expression were little changed from when, as a schoolfellow, I first entered into friendship with him. A

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kindlier man never lived; even the quick temper that went with his red hair never led him into injustice.

Like all men of genius, of course, he had his peculiarities. The very garb he affected, to the amusement of city crowds and the delight of his expensive tailor, was one of them. He used to work in it, never wearing an overall for even the messiest experiments. It was one of his favourite observations that stained clothes, like dirty instruments, were the mark of an incompetent scientist. His own tidiness was proverbial.

I hastened across the street to intercept him.

"A. B. C.!" I called.

He flourished his stick wildly as he turned.

"Shades of Darwin!" he exclaimed. "I was thinking of you this moment, sweet my friend. Are you free for a month or two?"

"I'm not very busy," I said.

"Not at all, you mean. An amateur archæologist like you, my leisurely Johnstone, is never busy."

My hobby certainly did not occupy a great portion of my time, and the rest of it was free enough.

"What do you want me to do?" I asked.

"To travel with me in my yacht. England depresses me; I want to see the sun, to smell the sea, to leave the fog and rain behind."

I inquired when he proposed to start.

"This afternoon."

"But——" I began.

"Go and pack!" he cried peremptorily, glancing at his watch. "I shall call for you in one hour and forty-seven minutes."

He refused to tell me more of our journey, and I hastened home. Punctually at the appointed time, he arrived and carried me off to the station.

I confess I was eagerly looking forward to seeing his yacht, the *Dædalus*. All the way down to Plymouth in the train, I questioned him about the vessel.

He told me that her tonnage was 1,100, that he had taken her over and re-fitted her some months before, leaving to the captain the task of engaging the officers and men. We were to sail at once.

I was not surprised to learn that this floating laboratory was full of devices that he had introduced, including one by means of which her course could be automatically controlled by a new kind of gyroscopic compass that he had invented. The captain had merely to set the course with a pointer on the dial before him, and this ingenious mechanism held the yacht to it, requiring no man at the wheel.

A. B. C. had also succeeded, it seemed, in harnessing the energy of the waves. Certain floats which formed part of either side of the vessel were movable, rising and falling with the motion of the sea. The result was that a certain amount of power was captured, transformed into electricity, and stored. The rolling of the ship was markedly diminished by this means, and, moreover, the floats were so ingeniously contrived that they helped to keep the hull clean, and so added to, rather than diminished, the speed of the vessel.

When we went on board, however, my interest in these and similar devices was overwhelmed by the impression made on me by the laboratory.

A large apartment in the centre of the ship, it was fitted with every aid to efficiency. The completeness and economy of its arrangements were truly wonderful: nearly all the appurtenances of a first-class physical, chemical, and even biological laboratory were there—from a high-tension installation to aerated tanks for marine animals—and the whole thing was suspended from the frame of the yacht in such a manner that it remained comparatively steady in all weathers. Nothing short of a gale, A. B. C. declared, could interfere with the experiments on which he proposed to engage.

We left Plymouth the next morning, bound southward, but without any definitely-fixed destination. A. B. C. had certain theories about the scale coloration of fish, a neglected and apparently trifling subject of which he had first shown the biological importance. (But then he had a flair for discovering the scientific significance of what his colleagues called trifles!) These theories he wished to put to the test in the warmer waters of the Mediterranean; but for the time being, he told me, he was relaxing his mind in a study of the constitution of the upper atmosphere.

OUR voyage began pleasantly enough, and the bright sunshine was delightful after the depressingly monotonous gloom of the English summer. Even in the Bay of Biscay the sea was calm; it was not until we had been at sea for five or six days, and were cruising off the Portuguese coast, that we had our first intimation of bad weather.

The day had dawned fair, and after breakfast I went up to the bridge, as was my custom, and chatted with the captain, a weather-beaten Devonian, and Pritchard, the first officer, a tall, dark young Welshman with a poet's eye and, it seemed to me, something of a poet's temperament. But even as we were exchanging commonplaces

on the fine weather the sea began to wrinkle, although there was almost no wind.

"It looks as if our good luck is not going to last," I remarked to the captain as the *Dædalus* dipped on the waves.

"Quite a swell coming up from the west," he replied.

A characteristic buzz called him to the telephone that communicated with A. B. C.'s laboratory.

"Yes, sir," I heard him say. "Due west. Due west it is, sir."

He gave Pritchard some orders.

"Mr. Hawkes wants our course changed," he said to me.

Then A. B. C.'s short round figure appeared on deck. He joined us, and I detected a note of excitement in his voice.

"Look at that, friend Johnstone," he said, thrusting a long, narrow negative into my hand. "Do you realize what that means?"

"I don't even know what it is," I told him.

"Shades of Newton!" he exclaimed. "Well, it's a spectrum photograph taken by the summer lightning early this morning, and it shows the helium line—that one there in the middle—in much greater strength than is normal. In other words, somewhere in the west, if I'm not mistaken, helium is being generated into the atmosphere in large quantities. I want to investigate it, if you've no objection. After all, one course is as good as another on a pleasure-trip like ours."

"But your fish——"

"May go on swimming," he said, "till I'm ready for them. They'll keep, but the gas won't."

JUST then a bigger wave than usual struck the *Dædalus*. It took him off his balance and flung him against the railings.

"Odd, isn't it?" he remarked, ruefully. "The glass isn't falling, there's no wind to speak of, and yet the sea is getting up."

The sea was indeed showing signs of increasing agitation. The trough of the waves grew larger and larger, and the yacht was tossed about like a cork. And still the sun shone down brightly.

Suddenly the captain turned to us and shouted: "Get under cover at once, gentlemen, and shut the doors behind you! Quick! Into the chart-room!"

His tone made us obey without demur. For a few moments nothing happened. We continued monotonously to dip and rise on the waves.

Then we seemed to go right under the sea.

I had a vision of an enormous mass of water sweeping over us. The portholes of the chart-room were covered by a swirling green torrent, and the next thing I knew was that A. B. C. and I were lying almost in darkness prostrate on the floor. A roar filled my ears, like the discharge of a cannon, and I felt the vessel stagger and tremble violently.

Slowly the light returned. The *Dædalus* resumed her tossing, and as we rose to our feet we heard men running along the decks and the sound of Pritchard's voice shouting orders.

We groped our way out of the chart-room and found the vessel streaming with water.

The captain told us we had run into a gigantic wave. He had seen it sweeping up from the west, towering above the surface of the sea. In his opinion we were lucky to have come through unscathed.

"I should surmise," said A. B. C., "that it has some connection with the discharge of gas I observed. Besides, I was taking soundings this morning. You know the method, my unscientific Johnstone?" He turned to me. "One sends sound-waves to the floor of the ocean and measures the depth by the time they take to be reflected back to the instrument."

"I've heard of it," I said. "The cable-layers use it."

"My instruments, however," he went on, with a slight smile, "are somewhat more advanced. This morning I was able to detect certain aberrations in the ocean floor that suggest a considerable upheaval. That is another reason why I changed our course."

"An earthquake?" I said. "Where?"

"Always due west. It might be Mexico, but it may possibly be somewhere in the depths of the Atlantic."

He spoke of the disturbances that take place under the sea, especially in the basin of the Atlantic, which, he said, is one of the most unstable surfaces of the world, disturbances as great as would suffice to destroy a whole continent of dry land.

His talk put me in mind of the fabled destruction of the lost continent of Atlantis, and I recalled the story to him. This land lay, I said, where the Atlantic Ocean now is, and its inhabitants were said to dominate the ancient world by their wisdom and magic. But a terrible cataclysm overtook them, and the whole continent sank beneath the waves, only a few lofty peaks, among them the Azores and the Canary Islands, remaining above the surface of the ocean.

"But what evidence is there of this, Mr. Johnstone?" the captain asked me.

I admitted that it was mainly legendary. The story of the Flood, common to all primitive peoples, may perhaps refer to the fate of Atlantis. Moreover, every Celtic nation, and they are the descendants of the

oldest inhabitants of Europe, has a tradition of a wonderful lost land in the west.

"The Bretons," I said, "tell of the country of Ys, drowned in the seas. Cornishmen have legends of Avalon and Lyonnesse, and the Irish of St. Brandan's Isle and 'Tir-na-logue'—the Land of Heart's Desire. And the Welsh, too, believe there is a sunken city in Cardigan Bay, whose towers and battlements may be seen by the fishermen on bright days, gleaming in the waters, and they have a tradition also of a mysterious country called Glassland, now sunk deep in the western ocean."

"Yes, indeed," broke in excitedly the chief officer, who had been listening. "I have heard many tales of Glassland. Its people were a very intelligent but godless people, and they——"

"That will do, Mr. Pritchard," said the captain. "Go and see what needs doing to the wireless aerials!"

"Aye, aye, sir," said Pritchard, relapsing into his usual state of alert discipline, and went down from the bridge.

The captain tapped his forehead significantly.

"It's the revivals he goes to on shore, sir," he said to Hawkes. "He's a good seaman, but at times he's taken queer. I would have got another man in his place for this voyage, but he was in the ship when she was on the Baltic run, and, besides, the harbour-master, his uncle, asked me to keep an eye on him."

"As long as he suits you, captain, he'll suit me," said Hawkes.

"Oh, he's a good officer, sir—no mistake about that. Only he gets excited sometimes, That's all."

"Well," I said, resuming our conversation, "this is all I know about Atlantis. There's no evidence in the proper sense, but all these legends, and, of course, the old riddle of the similarity of animal species on both sides of the Atlantic, seem to suggest there may be something in it."

"Atlantis or no Atlantis," remarked A. B. C., "I should imagine that this new upheaval is somewhere beneath the ocean. Perhaps there's a revolution in your lost continent!"

"Why don't you get reports from seismographical stations on shore?" I suggested.

"I've tried, my wise friend, but the wave put our wireless out of action. Well, I will get back to my spectra. You might let me know, captain, if anything fresh happens."

BY the afternoon the sea had become a pandemonium of fury. But there was still little wind and the sky was barely flecked with cloud. The rage of the waters fascinated me, and, clad in tarpaulins, I clung to a stanchion and fought to keep my balance, with the spray flying over me.

I was recovering my breath after a bad soaking when something fluttered through the air and fell heavily on the deck. Pritchard, the first officer, happened to be passing, balancing himself as if he were walking along a level pavement, and I called his attention to it.

It was the body of a seagull. If it was not already dead when it was washed on board, the impact must have killed it.

"Poor little bird," said Pritchard, as he lifted it to throw it overboard, "this is no weather at all for you to be out in. Ah, what's this?"

A kind of circular ring, with a long spike curved into a hook, had pierced the skin in the corner of its beak. He jerked it loose and handed it to me.

The metal was so discoloured that I could not make out what it was, and the design, too, was caked by a deposit.

As I examined it, I saw that Pritchard was looking at me strangely. His eyes were staring and his lips twitched.

"It's like the ear-rings of the girl of my visions," he said.

"Whose ear-rings?" I asked.

Then he told me a strange story.

As I had suspected, he was a bit of a poet, and, like so many other Welsh youths, he had in his time competed at Eisteddfodau. The subject of his verses never changed. They called him in his country, he said shyly, "the boy with a vision of a maiden's face."

He was, it seemed, obsessed by a face, a girl's face. Ever since his childhood he had seen it in his dreams and in his waking hours, in the meadows and the shadow of the hills upon the valleys, in the clouds, in the coals of the fire, in the swirl of water by the ship's side. It was always the same, and he proceeded to describe the face in a rush of words. I gathered that the girl was of extraordinary but foreign beauty; dark, dignified, and proud, yet with a promise of tenderness in the eyes and lips.

I was made rather uncomfortable by the vehemence and passion with which the dark Welshman poured out the tale of his imaginary love.

Luckily I was saved from committing myself to speech by the captain's harsh voice calling for Mr. Pritchard. The lad at once became again the trained officer, and abruptly left me musing on what he had said and wondering what was at the bottom of his Celtic mind.

I took the ring down to Hawkes.

"What do you make of it?" I asked him.

"I should want to analyse the deposit on it," he said, inspecting it through a

magnifying glass. "On the outside it looks and tastes like freshly-crystallized sea salts, but there's something firmer and older beneath. I'll see what I can do with it."

The sea grew even rougher towards evening, and the waves reached colossal heights. Neither the captain nor the first officer left the bridge. A. B. C. and I stayed in the laboratory, for it was difficult to move about the vessel. He had a spare bunk there, and, when night came, I turned in.

I woke in the early hours of the morning to find him standing beside me with the ring in his hand. "I've found out what it is," he said. "There was a layer of sea salt on top, but underneath were traces of a deep-sea deposit—calcareous ooze. I surmise that it has been for centuries at the bottom of the ocean."

He handed it to me. He had cleaned it with acid, and the design was unmistakable. It was the so-called Atlantean shell-scroll!

"It's very pure gold," he went on.

He had been working on it all night and was in his pyjamas. He turned from me to lie down, and fell asleep at once.

I woke again at eight and found it curiously easy to make my way up the companion. I was amazed on reaching the deck to find the water calm. The yacht was motionless, and in front of us, about a mile away, was a small island.

"What's this place?" I asked the second officer.

"That's what we'd all like to know, sir."

A kind of circular ring, with a long spike curved into a hook, had pierced the skin in the corner of the bird's beak. Pritchard jerked it loose and handed it to me.

he replied. "It's not on the charts. No one has ever heard of an island here before."

I wondered if it had risen out of the waters as a result of the tremendous submarine disturbance of which so much evidence had already been afforded us. Such things are by no means unknown, of course, although well-authenticated instances are rare.

True, I could remember no case of an island rising in the middle of the sea so far from land, unless Dougherty Island, reported independently by five skilled navigators as existing in the South Pacific fifteen hundred miles from land, but sought in vain by later seamen, might be such a one.

But at any rate, I reflected, the presence of A. B. C. Hawkes in the ship would authenticate this particular island beyond dispute, and I made up my mind to ask him to check the captain's bearing by the most refined methods he could devise.

He was intensely annoyed that I had not wakened him till noon; his red hair bristled with rage, and, refusing to speak to me, he hastened to join the captain in the chart-room. They were agreed that the island must have risen recently from the sea. Its bareness and general appearance went to confirm this.

The electric launch was ordered out, and A. B. C. and I and young Pritchard dropped into it and were soon on our way to the shore. The cliffs of smooth rock, glittering in the sun, rose sheer out of the sea, and for some time we cruised along, trying vainly to find a landing place.

"I seem to know this place," Pritchard burst out unexpectedly. "There ought to be an entrance."

His depression had vanished, and his face was bright with excitement. He steered the launch abruptly round a projecting spit of rock and we found ourselves in a small bay. We cautiously entered it, and, finding a place where the rock came down to the water with an easy slope, we scrambled ashore. The surface of the island was black and hard, rounded as if by the action of water. It was pitted with holes in which lay pools of water and a quantity of thick mud.

We paused to examine the nature of the rock beneath our feet.

"This was never formed under the sea," A. B. C. said. "It's vitreous lava, which shows that it must have cooled under atmospheric pressure on the surface. If it had been erupted under water, it would be crystalline. It must, therefore, have been originally above the sea, then sunk below it and now have risen again."

"But wouldn't it be covered with vegetation?" I asked.

"Not if it has really risen from a great depth," he replied. "Plant life vanishes at five hundred fathoms, and only mud remains, like that stuff in the hole beside you. I shall want some of it for my work on amœbic metabolism; the beginnings of many forms of life are in deep-sea mud. The whole island must have been covered with ooze, which the sea has washed away as it rose."

"Look at Pritchard!" I interrupted.

The lad was clambering up the steep cliff, taking a line round its great corners as if it were familiar to him. There were no obvious indications that the way he was taking would bring us to the top, but more than once, as we breathlessly followed him, I had an idea that we were treading some old staircase that had been worn smooth by the sea.

ON and on we climbed, Pritchard always ahead of us. All of a sudden we came up with him, standing on the edge of a great slit in the cliff.

"There ought to be a bridge here," he said. "Surely this is where the bridge was, a fine stone bridge, with a guard always standing on it."

"Yes," said A. B. C. gravely, "here is where it began."

And he pointed to traces of cuts in the rock.

"How ever shall we get across?" I asked.

"Why, jump!" cried Pritchard, and flung himself into the air. But the distance was too far, and he fell a dozen feet into the chasm. By good luck he landed lightly, and, although he must nevertheless have hurt himself, he began to climb the side of the gap.

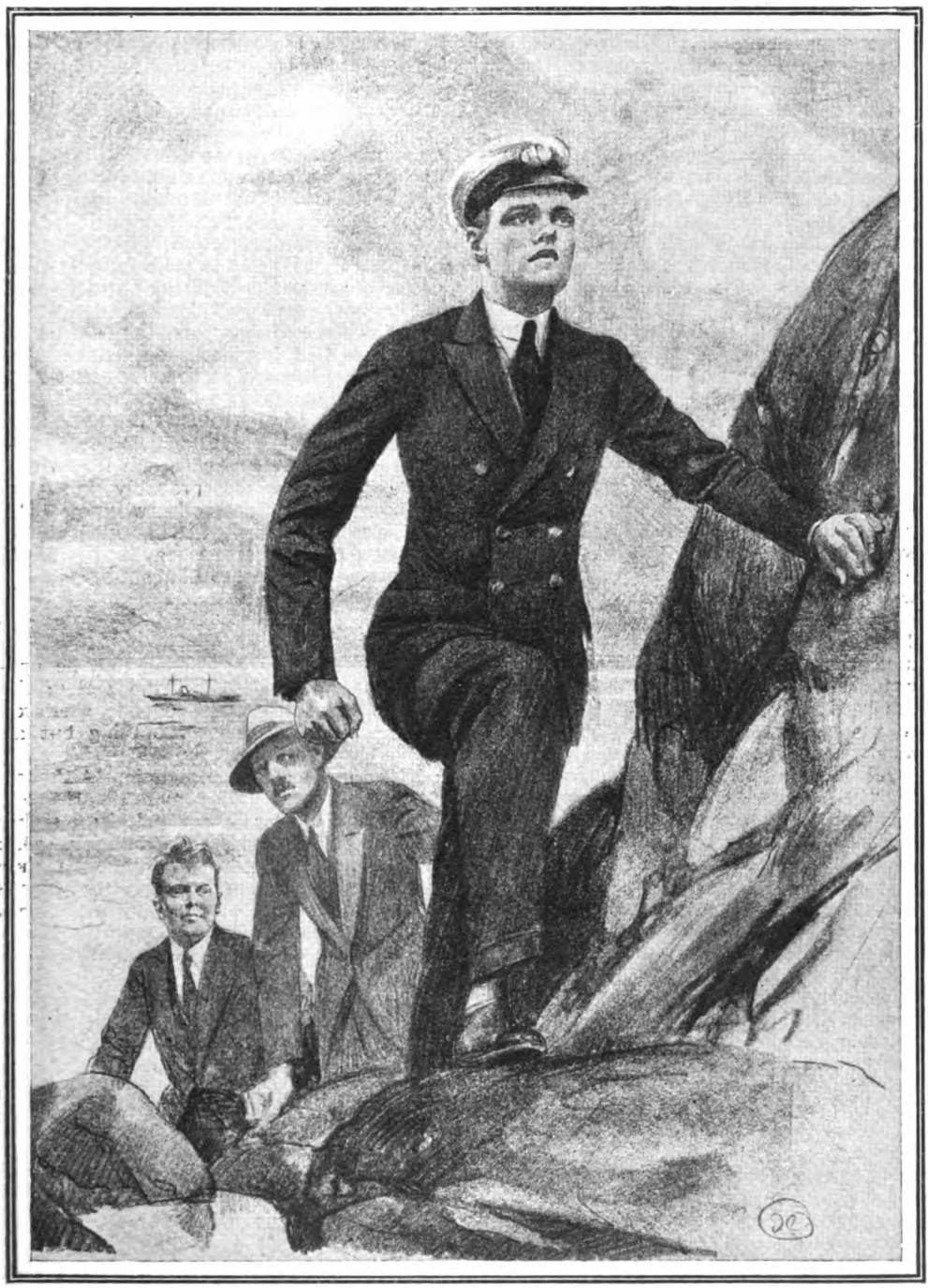
"I think we can cross up here, my more reasonable Johnstone," said A. B. C., pointing some distance round the face of the cliff. "If I'm not mistaken, the rock has crumbled there into a bridge."

It proved to be so, and we crossed in safety, although once I lost my balance and nearly fell into the crevasse.

Pritchard was still ahead of us and led the way. We reached the top at last and saw that it consisted of a little plateau. There was something in the centre, and the Welshman was hastening towards it.

We stumbled after him over the slippery surface, and in a minute or two I saw to my amazement what appeared to be a low circular chamber, surmounted by a pointed roof.

Its base was of the black rock of the island. Above this was a band of red



"Look at Pritchard!" The lad was clambering up the steep cliff as if it were familiar to him.

vitreous material, and the conical top was white and translucent. The walls were wonderfully smooth, and it was clearly the work of human hands, and, indeed, of skilled masons. Hawkes and I examined the surface of the structure. The blocks composing the wall were set so marvellously into one another that not even a knife-blade could be introduced between them. Nothing but a faintly-traced line remained to show that it had been built up of separate pieces. A. B. C. said afterwards that he thought the whole wall had been superficially fused after it was made.

"We shall need an explosive to open it," I said.

"Wait, wait!" said Hawkes, impatiently.

He had kept ahead of me in our circuit of the wall, and was hidden from me at the moment. I quickly joined him on the western side of the building, and found him staring at a dark blue oblong set upright in the side.

It was shaped like a door, but the colour was so dark that it was not very obvious against the black background. Closer examination showed that this patch was made of a different material from the rest of the wall; it was as if of very opaque bottle glass, with spidery streaks on the surface. There was no sign of handle or hinge, no indication that it might be a slab that would turn or pull out, for the blue joined the black without a gap of any kind, the sharp dividing line being as fine as if two metals had been welded together.

All this was a matter of careful inspection, but the feature which struck the eye at once was a queer projection, as big as a man's forearm, that stuck out from the very middle of the oblong.

It was shaped something like the stalk end of a pear, with the end of the stalk pointing downwards, and it merged gradually into the bulk of the material.

"This is the way in," said Hawkes, confidently, when he had studied various parts of the surface through a little glass, ignoring completely the ejaculations and gestures of Pritchard, who was fidgeting beside him like a man whose nerves are on the point of giving way.

"What is the spike for, A. B. C.?" I asked.

He replied with another question. "Have you ever heard of a Prince Rupert drop?"

I shook my head, and he explained to me what this was.

"The Prince Rupert in question was the man who fought for Charles I., and the drops were one of his many discoveries—or re-discoveries, perhaps I ought to say. They are made by letting molten glass drip into cold water, where it solidifies in pear-shaped drops, an inch or two long. Their peculiarity is that, if you nip off the stalk end, the whole thing collapses with a mild explosion into glass fragments and dust. This is due, of course, to a release of the stresses—but I'll explain that to you some other time. Well, I am confident, even after this superficial examination, that this oblong door before us, if I may so call it, is a mass of dark glass which was rapidly cooled at the time of manufacture into the state of a Prince Rupert drop, and that this," he laid his hand on the projection, "is the way to dissipate it. When the stem is broken the entire block which seals the entrance will, if I err not, break up."

As he finished speaking, the Welshman, whom we had forgotten, pushed us aside and, hurling himself at the door, seized the spike in his hands.

Together we managed to force him away, while A. B. C. shouted to him, "Let go, you fool! You can't break it, and if you did, the explosion would probably kill you. Leave it to me, and remember who you are!"

This seemed to bring the lad to his senses, for he stammered an apology and followed us, but with trembling limbs, as we withdrew some twenty paces.

HERE we halted, and A. B. C., drawing his revolver, explained that he proposed to shoot off the end of the spike. We were well to the side, sheltered by the wall itself from anything but an unlucky splinter.

The first shot went wide. Although A. B. C. was an exceptionally fine marksman, he was aiming at the very end of the spike, which was little larger than a penny. But the second shot was followed by a dull report, and the air opposite the door became full of a cloud of glittering dust. This gradually subsided, leaving, as we at once perceived, an entrance corresponding to the vanished oblong.

Pritchard rushed forward and sprang through it into the building. Hawkes preferred more deliberate methods, and we descended cautiously into the interior. A soft green light, penetrating the translucent roof of the structure, made everything faintly visible. As we moved away from the entrance, the sun shone through it and fell upon a striking object which was evidently the jewel of this treasure-house.

It stood on the middle of the floor, a huge slab of solid glass or crystal, about ten feet long and half as tall and broad.

As we leaned over it, taking care not to obstruct the sunlight, I received a shock which for the moment deprived me of words. In the midst of the slab was a human body extended at full length! It

lay there clear, calm, and perfect, and the substance between it and ourselves was so transparent that, in spite of its many inches of thickness, we could distinguish every detail.

Pritchard turned to us wild-eyed. "I have found her!" he cried. "She is the maiden I have always seen!"

The body was indeed that of a very beautiful woman. There was a great dignity in her delicate features, which still held the hues of life. Her eyes were closed and the long, dark lashes lay upon her cheeks. Her hands were clasped upon her breast, and I saw how long and tapering were the fingers, rosy at the tips as if stained with henna. Her feet and ankles, small and comely, were bare.

A silver fillet, adorned with bright feathers like a kingfisher's, carried her black hair from off her brows and showed the round golden ornaments in her ears, not unlike what the bird had brought us. She was clad in a richly-embroidered purple garment, drawn in at the waist with a girdle of animals' teeth joined by golden links. A necklace of precious stones—rubies and emeralds—encircled her neck.

"Wonderful!" said A. B. C. "It must be the body of an Atlantean princess, preserved in this solid substance by an art of which we know nothing."

"She's not dead!" cried Pritchard. "See, her eyes are opening! She's smiling!" His ecstatic tone was in strange contrast with A. B. C.'s curator-like speech.

It was uncanny. The sunlight, shining through the door in the wall, fell on her face, and her eyelids seemed to flutter and her lips to curve in a sweet smile.

"But, Pritchard," I had to say, "she's been dead for thousands of years."

"She's breathing, I tell you!" he shouted. "You can see she's alive."

Indeed I could have sworn that her bosom was rising and falling like a live creature's. I glanced at Hawkes and knew that the motion was visible to him, too. Here, then, was no hallucination.

We stood in awed silence, until the madman—for such I now counted him—broke in again.

"We must get her out," he said.

He snatched a dirk from his belt and stabbed furiously at the crystal that covered the body.

Too late I tried to catch his arm.

"You needn't alarm yourself, Johnstone," said A. B. C., dryly. "He'll find this crystal substance too hard to cut."

And I noticed that he himself was testing the surface with a tiny file.

The blade of the Welshman's dirk glanced off the sarcophagus, but, to my horror, it snapped one of the decorative shell-whorls that protruded from the side. It was terrible to think that this lunatic was damaging the marvellous relic of a lost civilization. I threw myself upon him and would have restrained him, but he flung me aside, threatening me with his knife.

"Listen, Pritchard," said A. B. C., sternly. "We are going back to the *Dædalus* to fetch some haulage gear to carry this thing on board. Put your knife in your belt and come along."

But the Welshman took no notice of him. He was gazing at the girl. Her smile seemed to grow; dimples formed in her cheeks, and her fingers unclasped.

We tried to remove him by force, but he turned at bay and faced us wild-eyed.

A. B. C. shrugged his shoulders. "There's only one thing for it," he said. "We must fetch help from the yacht, throw a net over him, and carry him off. He won't come willingly."

We climbed out through the opening in the wall. The last thing we saw as we looked back was Pritchard tearing madly at the crystal, babbling endearments to the thing inside it.

WE crossed the plateau and began to descend the cliff. Many times we lost the way by which we had come; without the Welshman's intuition to guide us we could not distinguish the path. More than once I felt the rock tremble slightly, and guessed that the earthquake was not yet wholly at an end.

After a long spell of hard going we reached the gap in the cliff, and saw the launch below us and the *Dædalus* at rest a mile away. The launch was rocking when we got into it and the sea was less smooth than when we had come in. As we neared the yacht, swaying perilously on the waves, the captain at the head of the gangway shouted something to us.

A. B. C. was steering and I lay exhausted in the bottom of the boat, but at his cry we turned and looked back at the island. The sea was beating fiercely on the rocky shore and seemed to be sucking round it like a rapidly rising tide.

It was no easy feat to approach the gangway in the sea that was running, but we managed it at last and hastened to the deck.

"Where's Mr. Pritchard?" asked the captain.

We told him of his Welshman's refusal to return with us.

"Then God help him!" said the captain. "The island's sinking again."

"But we must fetch him off," Hawkes cried.

"Get that launch aboard!" the captain roared to the sailors.

"Couldn't we stand in a bit nearer, A. B. C.," I suggested, "and try with the other launch?"

"There's nothing to be done, gentlemen," said the captain. "See for yourselves — no boat could get in there now."

"There's nothing to be done, gentlemen," said the captain. "See for yourselves —no boat could get in there now. Your landing place is deep under water already. I daren't risk my ship here any longer. If the island sinks, the suck will pull us under."

"True enough," said A.B.C., sadly. "Poor lad!"

"I'd save him if I could, sir—you know that."

The *Dædalus* began to throb with the rhythm of her engines. In a few seconds she was turned about and began to scurry through the seas. Waves of ever-increasing power pursued us and flung us heavily from side to side. Sometimes nothing would be visible but the raging waters; then we would rise on the crest of a monster wave and see the island settling deeper and deeper in the ocean.

The last thing we could make out through our glasses was a low rim of rock with a white fury of foam beating over it. The sun, a mockery in that hell of desolation, was setting calmly above it.

The sea grew calmer towards morning, and we turned back at full speed, hoping against hope. But there was now no sign of the island. It had been swallowed up again in the depths from which it had risen, and poor Pritchard had gone down with it. I pictured him in the treasure-house crooning to his love in the crystal sarcophagus, with the water slowly climbing the rocky wall of the island. I shuddered to think that there must have been a moment when the sea reached the summit of the cliffs and rushed into the building, and he realized that he was trapped.

A. B. C. had laboured in his laboratory all through that dreadful night. I went below to give him the sad news and found him standing hollow-eyed by his table, surrounded by instruments.

"I've solved the mystery," he said. "Now I know why the girl seemed to come to life when we broke into the building. I took the fragment of crystal Pritchard broke off her tomb and I've been examining its optical properties, although I haven't found out yet what it's composed of. Do you see that Venus over there?" He pointed to a little statuette in a niche in the wall. "Look at her through the crystal where I have ground it, and hold it tight in your fingers."

I put the little slab to my eye and faced the statuette. The Venus seemed to move! The lines of the marble trembled, and I put down the piece of crystal to make sure that she was as I had seen her before.

"Do you understand?" A. B. C. said. "It's a piece of scientific craft—magic, if you prefer the word—devised by your Atlanteans. That girl, I suppose, was a king's daughter, and when she died they embalmed her body, set it somehow in that block of crystal, and sealed it in the building. They knew that some day the door would be opened. Perhaps it was part of a ceremony the priests used to perform to suggest the immortality of their rulers."

"I don't see how it is done," I confessed.

"Quite simple, Johnstone," he explained. "The peculiar property of this substance, whatever it is, is that its refractive index is very sensitive to changes of temperature—that is to say, its power of bending light rays changes markedly as it warms up. I hope that's plain; I use the simplest words I can. The consequence is that, unless it is kept at one constant temperature, things seen through it seem to move, just as things seen through the shimmer of hot air do, and for the same reason. It was the change of temperature due to the warmth of your fingers and your breath that made the Venus move when you looked at her through the piece I have just handed you. I have no doubt that this effect was enhanced in the tomb by a skilful shaping of the surfaces."

"I see," I said. "So with the sunlight and the warm air entering the building and our approaching the crystal, the girl seemed to move and smile and breathe."

"Exactly."

"But why," I asked, for this interested me profoundly, "did Pritchard show such familiarity with the island? How did he know the way up the cliff so instinctively?"

"Did he?" said Hawkes. "Or did he only seem to? The Welsh, as you know, are incurably romantic, and Pritchard, I should judge from what you and the captain have told me, was an extreme case. There is, after all, nothing to suggest that he was really familiar with the place. Any skilled seaman, especially one accustomed from childhood, as he was, to the Welsh mountains, has naturally a better eye to the easiest path up a cliff than people like you and me."

"Don't you recall," I objected, "how he foresaw that there would be an inlet where we could land?"

"The swirl of the water round the cape should have suggested that to him as it did to me," A. B. C. replied, a little impatiently.

"Still, you have not touched on the strangest thing of all—his obsession with the image of a beautiful girl and his recognition of her in the Atlantean princess."

A. B. C. passed his hand abruptly through his red hair.

"The incorrigible Johnstone," he mocked, "wants to weave a pretty story out of a string of disconnected facts! A little scientific training would do you good, my friend. That Pritchard was obsessed by the face of a girl proves, if it proves anything, that he needed a psychologist's attention. You think he recognized her—I dare say the poor boy thought so too—but I am not in the least satisfied that he did. Had he described her beforehand, and had we found the body to correspond with his description, then I would grant you your point. But he did nothing of the kind. He saw the body lying there and assumed a resemblance with the, I doubt not, somewhat nebulous features of the lady of his visions."

I had to admit that he was perhaps right.

"No, my good friend," he went on, "leave forebodings and second-sight and every such kind of spook to the fortune-tellers and the story-tellers, who can at least turn to profit such credulity as yours, but permit me to prefer scientific facts. They at least are concrete and rational. Take the refractive index of this substance, for example——"

And A. B. C. turned back to his table to pick up our sole material relic of the lost island.

(Another story of A. B. C. Hawkes: Scientist, will appear in an early number.)

My Portrait Gallery

BY

SIR LANDON RONALD

FROM boyhood days it has been my good fortune to meet and know interesting people of all classes. I do not say this boastfully, but in a spirit of gratitude. I consider the privilege of mixing with great and interesting people an education in itself. For years I made a hobby of getting signed portraits of any well-known person whom I got to know, with the result that the walls of my study and my bedroom are literally covered with photos (all framed) of many of the most famous artists, musicians, authors, soldiers, and surgeons of the last thirty-five years. I also have a good few in my room at the Guildhall School of Music, as, oddly enough, it seems to help me in my work to be surrounded by the faces of those who have been, or are, friends and who have made great reputations for themselves. It is on the whole, I think, rather a unique collection, and is amazingly interesting from one point of view, *i.e.*, how truly the celebrity of the day may become entirely forgotten by the morrow! This dictum specially applies to interpretative artists, and but seldom to creative artists. Looking around the other night at the various friendly faces on the wall, it occurred to me that it might be interesting to jot down a few impressions of the personality and character of some of these great people as I know them. These little pen-sketches are the result. I shall select my victims at random, and care naught for the order in which, according to strict etiquette, they should appear.

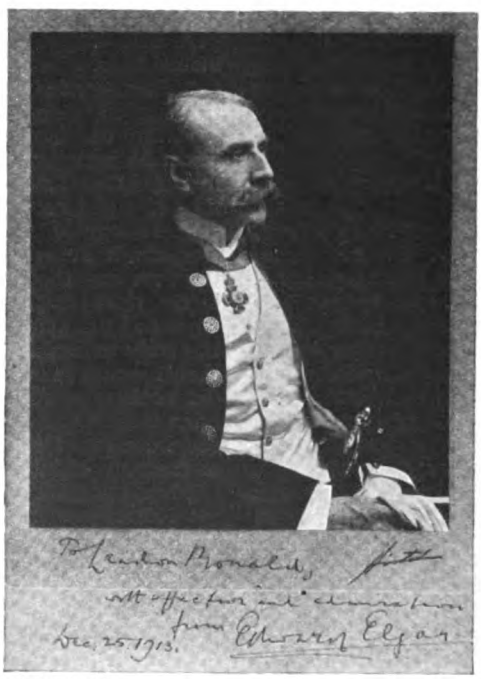


Photo: Histed.

Sir Edward Elgar.

There is a big picture right in front of me of Sir Edward Elgar. Let me tell you a few things about him—not the composer, but the man. He has been an intimate and dear friend for twenty years, and I loved his dear little wife (alas! taken from us four or five years ago) and his daughter Carice as much as I loved him. What a happy trio they formed, and what a terrible blank the death of beloved Alice Elgar made in that home! She had a hero-worship for her husband which is met with but rarely. Her acts of love and devotion to him were legion, and she will assuredly go down to posterity as a perfect wife and a gifted and lovable woman.

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Elgar is a most complex character, and as a man is extremely difficult to understand. He is a mass of contradictions and paradoxes. For instance, to-day he will be most communicative and talkative, and to-morrow there will not be a word to be got out of him! He is nervous and shy before strangers, but is affectionate and hospitable to his intimates. He has an amazing brain, and is master of many intricate things which have nothing to do with music. He is a great reader and must have a wonderfully retentive memory, because whether the subject under discussion is Greek literature, gardening, chemistry, engineering, or horse-racing, he is equally at home with all and sundry, and often takes one's breath away by the depth of his knowledge. The one subject which he always declines to talk about is music, and hundreds of times have I heard him repeat the remark, "I know nothing about music." As a matter of fact I can vouch that he has an enormous knowledge of music—both ancient and modern—and I cannot help thinking that what was once said perhaps as a joke has developed into a habit. Elgar plays no games to my knowledge, but he loves to joke and chaff his friends. He is fond of walking, and is very much happier in the country than in any big city. He has a great love for animals, and, like many another great man, his dog is his master! He has a particularly fine head and is of aristocratic bearing, and there is a great deal in his character and his outlook which can best be expressed by the word which he so often uses in his own orchestral scores, "Nobilmente."

Queen Alexandra.

QUEEN ALEXANDRA is so sweet and gracious a lady that it would require a far greater pen than mine to be able to give any adequate idea of her wonderful personality. Sixteen or seventeen years ago she always looked the most beautiful and queenly of all the renowned beauties of that period who used to surround her at Court functions either at Windsor or Buckingham Palace. The last time I had the honour to speak with her was about a year and a half ago, when I took Mischa Elman to play to her at Marlborough House. Although nearly eighty years of age, there was much of the old wonderful charm left, and it seemed to me even greater graciousness than before. It was on this occasion that she showed me her wonderful autograph book, and perhaps I may say that I have never felt quite so honoured in my life as when she asked me to write my humble name in it and insisted on a bar of "Down in the Forest" being added! After saying this, I must tell you that Queen Alexandra was the cause of my passing the worst five minutes of my life at the Guildhall School of Music. It came about thus. During the war Sir Richard Davies had borrowed the theatre to give an entertainment for the benefit of the League of Mercy or the Red Cross (at the moment I forget which it was). Queen Alexandra

Photo: Ellis & Walery.

Dame Clara Butt.

promised to attend, and the Lord Mayor, Sir Richard, and myself were commanded to receive her. The time arranged for her arrival was three-thirty, and she was to be shown straight into my room. The day came, and I was in the theatre about three o'clock, seeing to the finishing touches for Her Majesty's comfort, when a porter, whose sole duty was to attend to me, rushed into the theatre shouting and lisping, "The Royal Printhess ith here, thir! Pleathe, Mr. Printhipal, the Royal Printhess and two ladieth have arrived." I looked at him calmly and said, "What on earth are you talking about?" He answered very excitedly, "Pleathe, thir, they're in your room." I began to see that something had really occurred. "Who's in my room, you fool?" said I. "The Royal Printhess," he shouted back. I rushed to my room, and there, sure enough, I found Queen Alexandra, Princess Victoria, Earl Howe, and Miss Knollys!

The climax came when I learnt afterwards that *this porter had received them* and shown them into my room as if they had been entering for a scholarship exam.! Apologies on my side and explanations on theirs followed, and there was I in the really difficult position of having to try to entertain a Queen and a Princess for a half-hour, because it was impossible to begin the entertainment before the appointed time owing to the artistes not having arrived! It only remains to add that Her Majesty sat herself in my chair at my table and took the greatest interest in a patent telephone-holder that is attached to the table. Princess Victoria was kindness itself and begged me not to worry as the mistake was entirely their own, as they were sure that the entertainment began at three instead of three-thirty. Many of those present will still remember the enormous ovation Her Majesty received on leaving the theatre. Little did they know, however, all I had suffered!

I HAVE just caught sight of the portraits of Dame Clara and Kennerley Rumford. Well, I can sum them up in a few words. They are two of the dearest people in the world. "Clara and Bertie," as they are known to their friends, are absolutely

Photo: Window & Grove.

R. Kennerley Rumford.

unspoilt by their success, and are always doing some good action either in or out of their profession. They both have lovable natures, and all the years I have known them I have never heard an unkind word pass their lips. Bertie Rumford has a nice sense of humour, and I know no one who can enter into or enjoy a joke better than Dame Clara. One of the greatest pleasures of my life is to take part in a concert with them. Although they are the particular "stars" of the occasion, they make you feel that *your* part of the programme is that which matters to them, and they insist on you bowing and giving encores, and they obviously enjoy *your* success! How rare this is with "stars"! And how I love being able to tell it about these two! I end as I began: "They are two of the dearest people in the world."

Photo: Gabell.

Marie Corelli.

I GOT to know Marie Corelli through a curious incident. I wrote to her as a complete stranger, asking her to tell me the name of the book which *she* considered was her very best work, as I wished to add it to a collection I was making. She replied in an exceptionally friendly and kind letter which I would reproduce here, but it contains too many flattering references to my own work. Suffice it to say that she informed me that "Ardath" was to her mind her best novel, and that the late Poet Laureate, Lord Tennyson, was of the same opinion. She autographed and sent me a copy of the book, and at the same time extended me a cordial invitation to spend a week-end with her at Stratford-on-Avon. I accepted with avidity, because I was curious to meet a little lady of whom I had heard such varied accounts. I knew that she would never allow her portrait to be published or permit any representative of the Press to interview her. I had been told she was beautiful—golden hair, blue eyes, and a *petite* figure. As a matter of fact the portrait which is reproduced here will give you but a small idea of her actual appearance, because, to be honest, it is absurdly flattering. Perhaps I should add that it might have been like her when she was many years younger than when I first met her, but I can trace but little resemblance to her as I knew her in 1918. She proved to be a hospitable and delightful hostess, and was aided and abetted in her schemes to make you thoroughly at home and comfortable by her lifelong companion, Miss Vyver. She had a beautiful home with a lovely music-room, and she entertained on the grand scale. She talked interestingly and seldom referred to her work. I was astonished to learn from her that she was originally intended for the musical profession, and worked hard at music in her girlhood days. During the course of conversation she gave me the impression that her knowledge of music was little better than that of an average amateur. One remark she made I can never forget on account of its utter lack of meaning. We were discussing the genius of Wagner, and I asked her if she was one of his worshippers. She replied: "Indeed, yes. There is nobody like Wagner *when he brings the harps in*"! What could I reply to such a statement, and how could I be expected to take her criticism of music seriously? Still, I thoroughly enjoyed my week-end visit to her, and brought away with me many pleasant memories. One little action of hers will prove to you her generosity. She was showing me her books—she had a splendid library—and I was deeply interested in a very fine edition of Shelley

she possessed containing the Notes on "Queen Mab" and other poems. I duly made a note of the publishers, hoping I might be lucky enough to find a copy at some second-hand bookseller's. Two days after my arrival back in town, a parcel came for me containing her own beautiful copy with a delightful dedication! She had told me how much she valued it, and I know it meant a sacrifice on her part to give it away. It was a gracious and generous action.

MARK HAMBOURG is a born Bohemian and is in every sense a good fellow. Apart from his amazing pianistic gifts (and Busoni told me that he considered him to possess the greatest natural piano virtuosity of any living pianist) he is interested in china, glass, pictures, cigars, wines, and good living generally. Away from the piano, Mark is always *fortissimo!* There is no question of him hiding his light under a bushel. If he is playing bridge or poker (two favourite games of his) he plays *fortissimo;* if he shakes hands with you, it is with a *fortissimo* grip; his "How d'you do?" is hurled at you on a *fortissimo* note. His vitality is overpowering, his temperament volcanic. He is of short stature, very thick-set, enormously muscular, and has the head of a Beethoven. And withal there is a gentle, lovable side to his nature, and his heart is as big as his talent. I am perfectly certain that no professional has ever appealed to him for help in vain, and he is ever ready to give his services in the cause of charity. He is lucky enough to be married to an exceptionally charming lady, and he realizes it. And this cannot be said of many temperamental artistes! Mark Hambourg has a personality all his own; I know of no other like it. And I'm not quite sure that one could wish for another *fortissimo* Mark!

Mark Hambourg.

WERE I asked to name the antithesis of Mark Hambourg's personality, I could not make a better choice than that of A. S. M. Hutchinson, who wrote "If Winter Comes" and "This Freedom." Is there a more retiring, shy, or modest celebrity in the world? I doubt it. Two or three times I have inveigled him into meeting a few friends at my house, but he has generally succeeded in getting into some corner behind a curtain where no one would take any notice of him. On being discovered, he would always insist that he was such a boring person that he considered it unfair to my friends to inflict them with his company! As a matter of fact, if only one can get him going, he is a most entertaining and intelligent talker, with a delightful quiet sense of humour. It will be apropos to tell here the story of an amusing occurrence that took place at a certain hotel in Sussex, when Hutchinson and I found ourselves together with Sir Edward Elgar, Sir Frederic Cowen, and Sir Ernest Hodder-Williams. It was suggested that a group should be taken of us, and a photographer from the village was commissioned to do his worst. After the operation was over, I was asked to tell the old fellow that the copyright of the portrait was to be ours, and it was not to be sent to the Press. "And 'oo are ye all?" he asked. I told him, with as modest an air as I could assume, the names of the five of us. He looked me up and down, and said, "Oh, that's all right, that's all right. *Personally, I've never 'eard of one of yer.*"

A LARGE and early portrait of Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson has just caught my eye. Here is a case where a man's face indicates his character. You find depicted on his splendid profile, gentleness, kindness, modesty, sensitiveness, a love of beauty, and great artistry; and all these

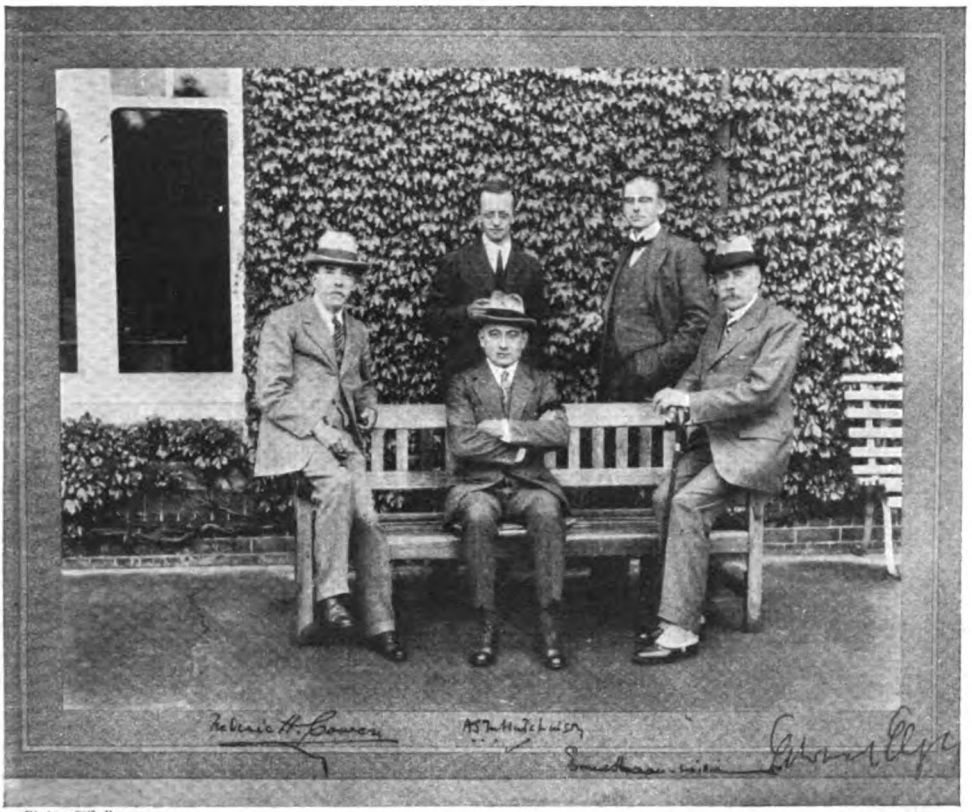

Photo: Stikells.

On the opposite page Sir Landon Ronald tells an amusing story of this photograph of himself and his friends, Sir Frederic Cowen, A. S. M. Hutchinson, Sir Ernest Hodder-Williams, and Sir Edward Elgar.

characteristics are his. I have known him for years, and have ever found him the most lovable of men. He told me one day that most of his real admirers have been musicians—or at least musical. I should account for this by the fact that he has one of the most perfect musical-speaking voices ever given to man. He is devoted to music himself, and on seeing him quite recently he said to me, "Sometimes my soul starves for good music. Life to me without music in it is like having a good dinner without anything to drink!" Everybody knows that he has a great gift for painting, and that he was educated to become an artist. What a loss that would have been to the stage! It is not for me to discuss him as an actor, but I would like to say that he has always appealed to me as the greatest of his generation. It is to be regretted that he never had a permanent home in London such as his colleagues Tree and Alexander possessed. He wandered from one theatre to another, with the result that he never quite got hold of the great public for any length of time, although his unique personality and gifts always placed him at the top of his profession. He has retired now for ever, but it is good to have such a great and lovable man still in our midst to recall to us his unmatchable artistry of earlier days.

Sir J. Forbes-Robertson.

(To be continued.)

THE UMBRELLA

by

ARNOLD BENNETT

ILLUSTRATED BY C. MORSE

I.

ALTHOUGH the village of Slipcup was larger and more opulent and more beautiful than he had gathered from his sister's rare letters, although it had a quite imposing bank and a cinema (open one night a week—*this* night), although its railway-station was a junction, with three platforms and four tracks, Mr. Arthur Malpatent felt as he passed up the steep main road as if he was passing out of the world, his world, into something unknown, strange, queerly romantic.

He was a man of fifty or so, grey, thin, lively, with a thin, mobile, and highly-expressive face, elastic lips, vague eyes. He talked confidentially to himself and smiled to himself, now and then flourishing his umbrella. Anybody with any knowledge of the physiognomy of professions would have seen at once that he was an actor—who dreamed when he was not acting. He was neatly dressed in a lounge suit to match his ample hair, and wore buttoned boots, a grey wideawake hat, and a club necktie carelessly knotted.

It was a beautiful warm evening, and at half-past nine night had not yet fallen. Mr. Malpatent had inquired the way to "The Weald," his sister's house. He had to continue up the main road and then take the second on the left. He did so. If the main road was steep, the by-road was steeper, with a bad surface for frail buttoned boots. He saw two low bungalows (semi-detached), neither of which was The Weald; and then he saw a house, and an inscription on its open garden-gate named it The Weald. It was the last house, the highest house, and it stood in its own garden on the moor. (The moor, however, was pleasingly covered with shrubs and small trees.) Mr. Malpatent mounted the steep slope of the small front-garden and rang his sister's bell. He then turned round to view the scene from the doorstep, and saw a marvellous panorama of the distant estuary.

"Charming! Charming!" he ejaculated. "But in winter it must be deuced bleak up here."

So this was the abode, and this the situation, which Muriel had chosen for herself! Here she lived with one servant. Her letters had announced that her neighbours were without exception very odd people, but Mr. Malpatent thought that few of them could be odder than his queer, beloved Muriel. The door did not open. No sound within the house. Mr. Malpatent rang again. He rang thrice. Still no answer.

"Yes," he reflected, impartially. "It might have been better to warn her. Still, what does it matter, after all? Man's life's a vapour. One is here to-day and gone to-morrow."

An immense, semi-clouded moon was approaching him over the summit of the hill. Indeed, all was romantic. Accidentally he pressed with his back against the door and it opened.

"Tut-tut!"

He saw the dim hall of Muriel's house.

"Anybody about?" he cried. No response. "Have I the right to enter my sister's house merely because it is my sister's?" he asked, and answered the question by entering, and clinched it by shutting the door. "Why not?" said he. "We have always been on the very best of terms. But how astonishingly careless

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timid women are!" He cried once more, "Anybody about?" His voice resounded in a sinister manner. No response. "Well!" he said, and walked first into the drawing-room on the left, and second into the dining-room on the right.

Nice rooms; full—too full—of old furniture, engravings, knick-knacks; some of which he recognized with a gentle thrill. Yes, Muriel evidently knew how to make herself comfortable. He came back into the hall. The stairs invited him.

"Well!" And he went up the stairs, into the even more unknown. "Perhaps the poor dear is in bed and asleep," he said.

Four doors on the landing at the top of the stairs, all shut, all as it were hiding secrets! He knocked at one of the doors and opened it and peeped in. A bedroom, empty. This happened twice. The two rooms were swathed in dust-sheets.

"She can put me up handsomely," said Mr. Malpatent.

The third door was locked. Mr. Malpatent's skin crept.

The fourth door proved to be the door of the largest and richest bedroom—crammed with a miscellany of furniture. Empty, but the state of the dressing-table indicated use!

"I am alone in this house," said Mr. Malpatent, impressed, and he invaded the room boldly.

From one of the windows he could see the large back-garden. It was much better tended than the small front-garden, whose drive, indeed, showed a deplorable array of weeds. But the back-garden was as deserted as the front-garden and as the house. Turning again into the room, he noticed, to his astonishment, a telephone by the bedside.

"Telephones out on the moor!" he murmured. "The world does revolve after all. But what does Muriel want with a telephone?"

Of course, he did not know that his sister had inherited the instrument from a previous tenant, and that she had kept it on account of its convenience for giving orders to the chief village tradesmen.

"Well," said he, brightly, to the room. "If my darling sister thinks I'm going to wait here all night for her the chit is mistaken."

He had not yet been in the house for more than a quarter of an hour; but he was an impatient man, if genial and kindly. He dropped his umbrella on the floor by the bed and picked up the telephone-receiver.

"Have you any trains to-night?"
"Where for, sir?"
"Oh, anywhere. Doesn't matter."

"Please give me the station," he said, sitting carelessly on the bed.

The Exchange asked him whether he wanted the police-station or the railway-station.

"The railway-station."

"What railway-station?" the Exchange demanded.

"Slipcup, naturally."

It did not occur to him that the Exchange was situated in a big seaside town five miles off and had at least a dozen railway-stations on its list of subscribers.

When he got Slipcup Junction he blandly inquired:—

"Have you any trains to-night?"

"Where for, sir?"

"Oh, anywhere. Doesn't matter."

He was like that. He learnt that in twenty-five minutes there was a train whose chief destination was Bristol.

"Oh, Bristol!" said he. "Very well, then, I'll go to Bristol. I've never been there, but I think Bristol will do quite nicely, thank you. I left my luggage with the head-porter in the porters' room." (Slipcup, though a junction, was rural and informal and had no left-luggage office.) "Will you please ask him to get it out on to the platform ready for me?"

"What name, sir?"

"Malpatent. Professor Malpatent. It's all labelled."

The student of the physiognomy of professions would have been wrong in putting him down as an actor. He merely resembled an actor. He was a professor of mathematics in the University of Leeds. There is, however, a marked similarity between the appearance of actors and the appearance of professors who have abandoned themselves utterly and passionately to mathematics.

In five minutes he had departed from his sister's house. He might have encountered Muriel in the road, in which case he would have returned with her, and probably sent down to the station for his luggage. But as he did not happen to meet her, he allowed her to fade out of his mind. He was extremely casual. Finding himself on the coast not many miles from Slipcup, he had had, suddenly and unexpectedly, the idea of paying a visit to his sister. A charming and brotherly idea! She was not at home. He dropped the idea, forgot it completely; and it was as though it had never been! He was like that.

Not till well on the way to Bristol did he observe that he had left his umbrella behind at The Weald. Regrettable, perhaps; but what did it matter? He could do without an umbrella. He had the temperament which makes for happiness.

II.

THE next morning, which was a marvellously beautiful morning, a slim and somewhat elegant lady, dressed entirely in white and dangling a pair of white gloves, might have been seen issuing from the front door of The Weald. This was Miss Malpatent. Even in Bond Street, or on a Sunday forenoon in Hyde Park, she would have passed as being quite presentable. As a fact, she made a point of being presentable—even to powder and rouge (though these aids rather clouded her reputation in Slipcup). But she did so in order to disprove the detestable masculine theory that women only dress "for" men.

A quarter of a century earlier Miss Malpatent had been jilted by a rake with whom she had most foolishly permitted herself to fall passionately in love. From that moment all men, except possibly her brother—whom she rarely saw—were alike to Miss Malpatent. At first she hated them; then she loftily pitied them; but she never distinguished between them. She was delighted when a strange man glanced at her with admiration. All admiration is good, and doubtless Miss Malpatent liked to be admired, but what she liked far more was the opportunity to return the admiring glance with a glance of cold contempt.

She was fifty, and despite grey hair did not nearly look it, because she had retained her figure, and because the charm of her pretty face depended not on complexion but on the excellent shape of its bones and the sparkling beauty of the eyes. She had a secret dread—common to all slim women—the dread of getting too thin; and she was always trying to achieve plumpness and never succeeding. She envied her servant Annie, who was a big, bouncing wench of forty or so. Annie looked older than her mistress, but she possessed what was for Miss Malpatent the incomparable charm of magnitude. There is a moral lesson to be drawn here.

Annie was cleaning the drawing-room window as Miss Malpatent issued forth on to the weed-encumbered gravel.

"I sha'n't be long, Annie," said Miss Malpatent, with the sweetest, most sisterly smile, as of a pearl of mistresses to a pearl of servants. "I'm only going down to see about the weed-killer."

Annie nodded. An ideal relationship, you would have said, between those two women who lived their solitary lives in appreciative amity together at The Weald.

Miss Malpatent stopped outside the first of the two semi-detached bungalows. A Mrs. Pastow lived in the first one and a Mr. Pastow lived in the second one. They were man and wife, and they were friends.

yet they lived in separate houses! Slipcup, however, as Miss Malpatent always maintained, was inhabited by odd people. Mrs. Pastow, gloved and aproned, was polishing the brass of the front door. She was a downright lady, who had no shame. Her husband kept a servant, but she didn't—and didn't want one—and her bungalow was assuredly the cleaner and neater of the twain.

"Can I come in?" asked Miss Malpatent, deliciously, if abruptly.

NOW Mrs. Pastow in her downright way objected to morning callers. She held that friendship and nearness and the general simplicity of village life could in no wise justify informality of intercourse, and especially the informality of morning calls—save for very pressing reasons. She knew that Miss Malpatent shared this view with her. Hence she divined at once that Miss Malpatent had something urgent on her mind.

"Come right in, Muriel," said she, heartily, and removed her thick gloves.

Her robust common sense, her time, and her knowledge of human nature were always at the disposal of her friends when her friends needed them, though she was apt to be curt with those who made merely frivolous demands on her sound qualities and her leisure.

"Here, sit here," she said, picking up a book that lay on an easy-chair. "I'm half way through the second volume of 'Orley Farm.' I couldn't help reading a bit this morning in the middle of my work. I shall beat you if you don't buck up."

Both of them were fervent admirers and students of Anthony Trollope. Indeed, they read little else, and were rather scornful of the Brontë and Jane Austen sects in the district.

"Now I can see you're a bit upset."

Thus did Mrs. Pastow enjoin Muriel Malpatent to begin the recital of her woe. Twelve years younger than the spinster, she nevertheless treated her as a niece. Both women sat.

"Am I upset?" Muriel's tone was a little weak, uncertain. She knew that it was useless to try any pretences with Mrs. Pastow. "Well, it's about Annie."

"O-oh! The model maid! She's not taken to drink, has she? I always said she would, remember. Here! I shall take my apron off too." Mrs. Pastow took her apron off and put it under her chair.

"Oh, no! It's worse than that."

"Worse than drink? No, it isn't. Because there's nothing worse, my dear."

Muriel Malpatent shook her head and smiled sadly.

"That girl," said she, "was determined to get me out of the house last night. It was cinema night, you know. She went last week and saw something called 'Daughters of the Storm,' and liked it. And it was such a success last week they brought it again yesterday, and the girl would have me go to it. Never was anything so beautiful, and so on and so on! She knows quite well I don't care for films. However, she was so insistent that I said I'd go. I didn't want to hurt her feelings. Anyhow, she got me out of the house. But I didn't go to the films after all. It was such a lovely evening I walked over the hill instead, right down into Mersington. When I came home her ladyship was in bed—at least, she was in her room and no light burning. But do you know what I found in *my* bedroom?"

"No. What?"

"I found a man's umbrella! Yes, my dear! A man's umbrella in my bedroom!" Miss Malpatent's voice shook as she announced the outrage. "And what's more, it was lying by the side of my bed. She must have had a man in the house. Of course, I saw at once then why she'd been so anxious to get me out of the house. She'd arranged a rendezvous."

"But are you sure?"

"Well, the umbrella couldn't have walked upstairs by itself, could it?"

"But why in your bedroom?"

"My *dear!* The telephone, of course. He'd wanted to use the telephone. I do wish I'd had that telephone moved long ago, as I said I would. It's frightfully inconvenient. And I'll tell you something else. The umbrella is a very good umbrella. Which seems to me to prove either that Annie's carrying on with some rake above her own class, or, if he's of her own class, he's a thief and stole the umbrella. . . . Well, what do you make of it?"

"I don't know what to make of it. Have you tackled her about it?"

"Indeed I haven't tackled her about it! It was for her to speak. I simply put the umbrella on a chair and left it there. I needn't tell you I had very little sleep. A man been in my bedroom and using my telephone and probably sitting on my bed! When she came in with the tea this morning, naturally she saw the umbrella. You should have seen the start she gave—though she tried to cover it as well as she could. She blushed. And I felt so queer and nervous I'm afraid I blushed too. Still, I said nothing. I was most sweet to her, as I always am. I gave her every chance to make some explanation. But did she? Not a word! She knows she's in a hole and there's no escape—all through her gentleman forgetting his umbrella—and

yet she doesn't say anything! Talk about an ostrich. She didn't even ask me how I liked the film. Yesterday afternoon she was all film, film. This morning not a syllable about the film! Can you conceive it, my dear? Here that woman has always pretended she's got no use for men—silly thing she is! One would have thought she had a positive sex-complex against men! And I believe she had, too! But not now!

servant, and I've always said so," put in Mrs. Pastow. "Where's the umbrella now?"

"It's where I put it—on the chair. But she's done the room. Oh, yes, if you please, she's done the room and left the umbrella where it was. Can you imagine it? The brazenness! I don't know what to do, I really don't."

"I know what I should do," said Mrs.

"When she came in with the tea, naturally she saw the umbrella. You should have seen the start she gave—though she tried to cover it as well as she could."

Now she's carrying on. I've treated her more like a friend than a servant——"

"That's always a mistake."

"I know! I know!" cried Miss Malpatent, admitting guilt. "But I have. And this is how she rewards me! But I've noticed several little things lately. In her work. Forgetful. A bit capricious. Careless. I understand now! Instead of getting on with her work she was thinking about the owner of the umbrella. Of course, she'll have to go. I couldn't possibly keep her. She was *perfect*, that woman was! So devoted, so thoughtful. *And* punctual."

"There's no such thing as a perfect

Pastow, with characteristic robust decisiveness.

"What?"

"I should tackle her about it. I should have it out with her, and at once."

"Never!" Miss Malpatent protested. "It's her place to speak. She knows all about the umbrella and she owes me an explanation."

"Well, she does. I admit that. But supposing she doesn't give you the explanation? Supposing she lets it drag on? You know what servants are."

"I was wondering whether——"

"What?"

"Whether Amelia mightn't know something."

The ancient Amelia was Mr. Pastow's servant, in the adjoining bungalow.

"Oh, I never talk to Amelia more than's necessary," said Mrs. Pastow, curtly.

"But she talks to Mr. Pastow, doesn't she? I know he's often made me laugh repeating the things she says to him."

"Well, Charlie's coming in for lunch to-day. When he gets so sick of Amelia's cooking he can't stand it any longer, then he asks me to ask him to lunch. I'll see whether he's heard anything, if you like. Not that I'd trust anything Amelia says!"

"No, of course not."

"It's very trying for you, my dear," said Mrs. Pastow, kindly, as Miss Malpatent rose to leave. "But I'm sure I'm right. You ought to tackle her straight."

Miss Malpatent sadly shook her head. You would have thought that she was broken by misfortune. Nevertheless, she held herself proudly enough as she passed down the road towards the village. And when she returned to The Weald her charming manner to Annie was absolutely faultless—so faultless that umbrellas might never have been invented. But Annie, for her part, was startlingly and disconcertingly glum—to the point of rudeness. It was a hard world for mistresses.

III.

MR. PASTOW came to his wife's lunch in a particularly jolly mood. He was a stoutish man of forty-two, with a reddish, rural face; brown beard and moustache; fairly robust voice; country clothes. He was not always jolly; on the contrary, like many fat men, he was addicted to moods of grave depression, when his conscience or something of the sort got hold of him and worried him. It was in such moods that his wife preferred him; when he was jolly she was apt to be a bit sardonic, and he never knew why; she never told him, being well aware that it advantages a woman to practise mystery with a man. There were only two things in him to which she objected: his beard and his irresponsibility. As to his beard, he clung to it because it saved the terrible daily task of shaving. He had held the Chair of Psychology in University College; but when he inherited some solid money he gave up the Chair, saying that he could conceive no reason why he should work when he need not. He still published pamphlets and small books on his own subject; his wife smiled indulgently at them and asserted that the worst novel of

Anthony Trollope's was a better text-book of psychology than any that any lecturer on psychology ever issued.

The twin bungalow arrangement was one of the fruits of his irresponsibility. Looking for houses, they had seen the twin bungalows.

"Let's each have our own home," he had suggested, humorously.

His wife had laughed disdainfully.

"But why not?" he had demanded, defending the sudden, capricious, unconsidered notion.

Whereupon his wife quickly agreed, just to try him. He was entirely ready to enter on the wild experiment. She wondered how far he would let it continue. He had now been letting it continue for four years. To her surprise it suited her at least as well as it suited him. It seemed to combine most of the blessings of marriage with very few of the drawbacks.

They lunched in the kitchen, for reasons of cookery, Mrs. Pastow being cook as well as wife on these occasions.

"You'll never believe it, Sally," he began, as he put the first mouthful of welsh rabbit into his eager mouth, "but Muriel's losing her sex-complex."

"What on earth do you mean, boy?"

"She's getting herself tangled up with some man."

Mrs. Pastow did not believe it, but she was startled, and, as always when startled, she grew cautious.

"Oh!" said she, dryly.

"Yes," said he. "I've had such a morning as I think I've never had. Muriel's Annie was down confabulating with old Amelia at eight o'clock or soon after, and, of course, I had it all—no, not all, but a lot of it—with my bacon at nine. I should say this must have been the greatest morning, the most dramatic, in the whole history of Slipcup."

"Oh!"

"Yes. It seems that our dear Miss Malpatent pretended to go to the cinema last night; only she didn't go. We know she didn't go—when I say 'we' I mean, as usual, Annie and Amelia—we know she didn't go because the girl that takes the money is a friend of ours, and she swore last night that Miss Malpatent had not been in. Now, the question is: Where was Muriel last evening? Well, we can answer the question. Annie was out; it wasn't her night out, but she went out, as there was nothing to do at home—she went down to the village; that was how she learnt from the cinema girl that Miss Malpatent hadn't been where she set out for. When she came home—it was rather late—she saw Miss Malpatent coming down the hill, from the moor. 'Oh!' says Annie to herself, 'this is rather odd.' And she hid in the hedge until Miss Malpatent had got into the house, because she wasn't sure if Miss Malpatent would quite care for her taking a night off without leave. Then she crept in afterwards—quietly. But Miss Malpatent must have known she'd been out all the evening, and counted on it, because this morning, when Annie took up the tea, she found absolutely convincing, undeniable evidence that there'd been a person of the male sex in Miss Malpatent's bedroom last night. When she saw the evidence she didn't say a word, and Miss Malpatent didn't say a word, but Miss Malpatent blushed, I can tell you, blushed like anything. The theory is that Miss Malpatent, guessing that Annie *would* go out, surreptitiously introduced a man into the house and then got him away and accompanied him over the moor—probably to Mersington."

"Oh!"

"Yes."

"And what was the absolutely convincing, undeniable evidence?"

"The fellow forgot his umbrella—left it in the bedroom! The pair had no doubt been up there to use the telephone. Hence I say that Miss Malpatent is losing her sex-complex. I say further that she is somewhat ashamed of losing it. Otherwise, why should she make a secret of her man, why should she pretend to go to the cinema and not go? Why should she blush when Annie catches sight of the male umbrella?"

SILENCE fell between husband and wife. Mrs. Pastow snatched, rather than removed, the empty plates from the table, and threw, rather than placed, the clean plates on the table for the ham and salad.

"My dear," said Mr. Pastow, "you are strangely moved."

Mrs. Pastow burst out laughing.

"My poor boy," said she, "I wonder how you can interest yourself in such ridiculous tittle-tattle. That's all." And she laughed again.

"It's nothing to laugh at, believe me!" the husband reproved her. "From all I can gather the excellent Annie regards herself as positively insulted and outraged by what has occurred. After all, she and Muriel have been most beautifully at one in their attitude towards the sex which—which is not theirs. And now the male umbrella! Personally I am delighted at the news. It would be idyllic to see Muriel philandering—perhaps marrying. I should attend her wedding with the utmost satisfaction. I should esteem Muriel's marriage

"There's no such thing as a perfect servant, and I've always said so," put in Mrs. Pastow. "Where's the umbrella now?"

as the greatest lark that ever was or could be." He smiled thoughtfully. "Ah!" he said, reflectively. "For fun, for real fun, give me village life every time. For pure diversion, no town is in it with a village."

"If you want fruit," said Mrs. Pastow, "it's there on the dresser."

"Are you leaving me, my dear?"

"I am. I'm going out—now, this instant."

"But you haven't eaten your delicious ham and salad."

"No, and I sha'n't; at any rate, not at *this* meal."

IV.

"MY dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Pastow, when she reached The Weald and found Miss Malpatent walking to and fro somewhat agitatedly in the front-garden. Tears, she noticed, stood in Miss Malpatent's eyes. She had hurried up the hill in order to tell Miss Malpatent without the loss of one moment that some mistake, some misunderstanding, some misapprehension, had occurred on somebody's part, and that assuredly Annie was not guilty of the umbrella. If this mistress and this servant both lacked the ordinary sense to talk plainly to one another, and so clear up a silly and dangerous situation, then Mrs. Pastow was determined to talk plainly to each of them for their joint good and their earthly salvation.

"What is it now?" Miss Malpatent demanded curtly, almost rudely, in a broken voice, stifling a hysterical sob.

"I've found out one thing," answered Mrs. Pastow, in a tone intended to tranquillize the disturbed. "Annie knows no more of the umbrella than you do yourself. She was just as astonished as you were to see it in your bedroom."

Whereupon Miss Malpatent's glance blazed down destructively upon the robust Mrs. Pastow.

"My good woman," said she, with extraordinary bitterness and resentment and rudeness. "My good woman. I've no doubt you mean well, but please don't annoy me any more than you can help by such a silly tale. *Of course* Annie knows more about the umbrella than I do. I asked you before and I ask you again: Could the umbrella have walked upstairs—or couldn't it? You don't accuse me of putting it where I found it, I hope?"

"No. Certainly not."

"Well, then?"

Mrs. Pastow was wise enough to know when she was beaten, and so she strategically withdrew with the minimum of loss. She perceived that reason had vacated the throne of Muriel's intelligence. And, therefore, she decided on the spot that she would, and indeed must, postpone any further remarks until reason had returned to its seat. She laughed sadly at human nature as she went back to the bungalow, and the first thing she did on arriving was to snub Mr. Pastow.

Later in the afternoon Miss Malpatent, having eaten nothing at lunch, and having recovered some of her self-control, rang for tea, which was brought into the drawing-room by stout Annie in a defiant style.

"Wait one moment, Annie." Miss Malpatent stopped her at the door as she was going out. "This milk has turned." Miss Malpatent's voice was a sugary masterpiece of dissimulation.

"And what if it is turned?" Annie retorted. "Can I help the weather? There's no pleasing you, miss, and that's all there is to it. Look at the lunch I cooked for you, and you snorting at every dish. I've got my feelings same as other people. And now it's the milk, *if* you please."

Inflammable matter had at last caught fire and exploded. It was bound to be.

"I will not permit you or anybody to talk to me in that way," said Miss Malpatent.

"You mean you'd like me to leave?"

"You must do as you choose, Annie." Pathetic attempt of Miss Malpatent to be indifferent!

"So I will leave!" said Annie, with excessive heat. "So I will leave! This is no house for me nowadays, this house isn't. I'll leave now, and you can keep my wages in loo of notice."

She slammed the door and went upstairs. A moment later Miss Malpatent also went upstairs and came down again bearing the umbrella. In twenty minutes Annie, in all her best clothes, hot, flustered, and very warlike, came down in turn. The drawing-room door was open.

"I'm off, miss," she nearly shouted from the hall. "I'll send up a man with a barrow for my box."

"Annie," said Miss Malpatent, approaching her, "you'll take away this umbrella," and she held forth the umbrella. Both women gazed in horror at the incriminating object, origin of an immense disaster.

"I'll take no umbrella, let alone that one."

"*You will take away this umbrella,*" Miss Malpatent repeated, with icy and devastating authority.

It was a duel. By sheer force of will Miss Malpatent won. Annie took away the umbrella.

Alone in the house the victor tragically wept.

NOW, as she was descending the hill into Slipcup Annie met a gentleman ascending. He had grey hair and was harmoniously clad in grey. His manner of walking was flamboyant. And he was singing to himself. He looked at Annie and then at the umbrella, and then he stopped, and under some strange influence Annie also stopped.

"What are you doing with that umbrella, madam?" the gentleman inquired, looking Annie straight in the face and frightening her.

"You will take away this umbrella," Miss Malpatent repeated, with icy and devastating authority.

"Nothing, sir," she faltered.

"I say, what are you doing with that umbrella?"

"Miss Malpatent told me to take it away, sir."

"Well, you'll just take it back, then! Quick! March! That umbrella's mine. I left it behind me last night, by inadvertence. I am Professor Malpatent. Are you the perfect 'Annie' that I've heard about from my sister?"

Annie was somehow glad of the excuse to return to The Weald. But she let the Professor precede her.

V.

"I DO think, Arthur, you might have left a note to say you'd called," said Miss Malpatent to her brother.

The reconciliation between the mistress and the servant was one of those intimate and elemental affairs in which the barriers of class break down utterly.

"We mistrusted one another," murmured Miss Malpatent to Annie. "Never let us do it again. It's too serious."

"Yes, miss."

Mrs. Pastow benevolently smiled. The village laughed. Mr. Pastow roared.

MR. BILLINGHAM, THE MARQUIS, AND MADELON.—No. 3.

Mrs. Block Contributes

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBEY

"THAT horrible woman!" Madelon exclaimed, gripping Mr. Billingham's arm, as they sat in a retired corner of the Sporting Club bar.

"She is indeed deplorable," the Marquis agreed, from the other side. "To-day, at one of the tables in the Casino, before the opening of the Cercle Privé, she created a scene. She plastered the board with plaques. She utterly failed to remember. She claimed everything. Her voice—— A horrible memory! The croupiers had no choice. They gave in. She took what she wished. When she departed everyone was overjoyed."

"She carries some of the stuff about her," Mr. Billingham observed, judicially. "Fine woman in her day!"

The woman to whom they referred, Mrs. William Block, of Leeds, stood looking round for a seat, and, finding none, scowled. She was florid, fat, notwithstanding the desperate efforts of a world-famed costumier, and vulgar. She swung in her hand a gold bag, adorned with precious stones. She wore upon her person two pearl necklaces, a pair of large diamond ear-rings, a succession of diamond bracelets, and several glittering hatpins. Her costume was white and bulgy. She was a well-known *habitante* of the Hôtel de Paris, whose friends were sycophants and whose acquaintances fugitive, and she was reputed to be the widow of a leather merchant who had made a million pounds in hides.

"She is one of the people," Madelon confided, "who upset all my ideas of conventional morality. I should like to rob her."

The Marquis dropped his eyeglass and twirled the corner of his moustache.

"It is an idea," he admitted.

Mr. Billingham considered the matter.

"If one could hatch out a deal," he confessed, "I guess this is a case where one wouldn't need to be too darned particular. That woman don't deserve to be allowed to go about alive, looking the way she does, and with half a million dollars' worth of jewels missing their opportunity in life."

Madelon smiled up at him in intriguing fashion.

"Do something about it, Mr. Billingham," she begged. "You are already in favour with her. Do you not remember giving her your seat yesterday evening?"

"Say, that don't count for much," Mr. Billingham protested. "She was leaning over me with a kind of blend of lily-of-the-valley and patchouli scent, pretty well stifling me, brushing my hair the wrong way, pushing her plaques on and shouting out her stakes till I was glad enough to make myself scarce."

"Nevertheless," Madelon reminded him in a whisper, "you gave her your place, and she is smiling at you now."

It was an incontrovertible fact. Madelon rose to her feet with a sudden graceful movement.

"I have an idea that there is a place for me at my favourite table," she confided. "I go to see."

Mrs. William Block advanced a few steps and beamed at Mr. Billingham. He rose at once.

"*Vous désirez une chaise, madame?*" he demanded.

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"I'll sit down all right," the lady replied, dropping heavily into the chair, "but I ain't French. Waiter, I'll have a gin fizz."

"An excellent drink!" Mr. Billingham murmured.

"I like a glass of champagne most times," the lady confided, "but I'll have to drink so much for dinner that perhaps I'd better lay off for a while. I'm dining with the Higginsons—Jim Higginson and his wife. You know them, I dare say."

The Marquis felt himself included in the query. He shook his head.

"I have not the honour," he murmured.

"Can't say that I know them," Mr. Billingham confessed.

"Jim's father made his money in woollens at Huddersfield," the lady explained, "and Jim got into that cotton scheme somehow. Why," she went on, smiling at Mr. Billingham, "you must be the gentleman who gave me his seat yesterday evening."

"I had that pleasure," Mr. Billingham admitted.

The Marquis rose stealthily to his feet. He was fond of his friend, he was very fond of his niece, but, like all real aristocrats, he was in his way a snob. He did not care to sit next Mrs. William Block.

"I wait for you," he explained, with a wave of his hand. "I have an affair——"

"Jumpy little person, your friend," Mrs. Block remarked. "Never mind! All the more room for us. Where are you staying, Mr.—Mr.—what is your name?"

Mr. Billingham produced a card.

"My name is Billingham, ma'am," he said—"Samuel T. Billingham, of New York. I was interested in linoleums, but I've sold out."

"Retired, eh?" the lady remarked.

"That's how you put it over here," Mr. Billingham conceded, cautiously. "I'm not saying that I'm right out of the game yet."

"My name's Block," the lady confided—"Annie Block. My husband was in hides. Nasty dirty things, I always thought, but he made a cool million at it."

"Pounds?" Mr. Billingham inquired, in an awed tone.

"Pounds sterling," was the definite reply. "None of your silly dollars!"

"I trust," Mr. Billingham continued,

"Vous désirez une chaise, madame?" Mr. Billingham demanded.
"I'll sit down all right," the lady replied, "but I ain't French."

" that your husband remembered to whose inspiration his success was due ? "

" I don't know what you're getting at," Mrs. Block observed, " but if you want to know what he did with his money, I'll tell you straight ; he left it to me. It will cost you one bob at Somerset House to find out that I ain't a liar, and if you happen to know a word or two of French, just rub it into that flunkey there that a lady doesn't want to wait for a gin fizz half the evening."

Mr. Billingham proved equal to the occasion. The gin fizz was produced and the lady, notwithstanding her colossal inheritance, showed not the slightest objection to her companion paying for it. They conversed for a time with growing intimacy.

" Are you married ? " she asked, a little abruptly.

Mr. Billingham scorned the suggestion.

" Put it off till too late, I guess—a great mistake ! "

She sighed, and scrutinized him benignly.

" What do you mean by ' too late ' ? " she demanded. " You're in the prime of life."

Mr. Billingham shook his head gloomily.

" I am healthy," he admitted. " I'm only just round the corner of fifty, but I guess I'm still a little particular. The women I care for seem to want something younger."

" Rubbish ! " the lady asserted.

" Take your own case now," he went on, earnestly. " You are a widow, I understand. You are bound to marry again—anyone can see that. You wouldn't care to have anything to do with a man of my age."

Mrs. William Block laid four chubby fingers and a fat thumb upon his arm. So far as her double chin would allow her, she looked arch.

" You are a funny person ! " she declared. " Come on—I dare you ! Ask me now. I might be tempted."

Mr. Billingham bore the assault stoically.

" If I did make such an idiot of myself," he observed, " I know very well what would happen, and so do you."

" I'd have you," she assured him.

Mr. Billingham contemplated that wonderful array of jewellery with which she was decked, remembered his pledge to Madelon, heaved a deep sigh, and permitted himself to touch the massive arm which leaned against his.

" What are you doing for luncheon to-morrow ? " he asked.

" That depends upon what you want me to do," was the brilliant reply.

At the end of a week Mr. Billingham had lost half a stone. He escaped one morning from the Hôtel de Paris at an early hour and met his friends, the Marquis de Félan and Madelon, his niece, at one of the smaller *cafés* at the back of the town.

" Someone else," he complained, " will have to take a hand in this game."

The Marquis stroked his moustache.

" My turn, I gather," he observed, " is to come later."

" What can I do, dear man ? " Madelon asked, patting his hand. " I am here. I am anxious to help. I must confess that at first I watched your sufferings with heartfelt sympathy. Lately I am not so sure. You are either getting callous, or you are becoming an admirer of the gargantuan in my sex."

Mr. Billingham groaned.

" Listen," he announced ; " we approach the end. I am veritably the accepted suitor of Mrs. Annie Block, widow of a defunct dealer in hides. The million is in her own name."

" It is incredible ! " the Marquis declared.

" A million ? It is worth the trouble ? " Madelon murmured, inscrutably.

Mr. Billingham smiled for the first time for days ; a smile that spread and extended to the wrinkles around his eyes.

" Well," he continued, " I guess I'm about through with my part. It is your uncle who takes the floor now."

The Marquis coughed.

" But supposing the lady should object to this—er—substitution of attentions ? "

Mr. Billingham's smile broadened.

" I should worry," he murmured. " Play your part as I have played mine, Marquis—and there must be no shirking, mind—and the thing is accomplished. This morning we meet at the Café de Paris and I shall present you. Then I talk to Madelon. The rest—well—some cinch, I can tell you ! "

The Marquis was a little uneasy. He was haunted with visions of a magenta dress which the lady had worn on the previous evening.

" I am not sure," he ventured, " whether my methods may appeal."

Mr. Billingham struck the little table with his fist.

" See here," he announced ; " it's a closed pocket-book on this trip if you show the white feather. The game's as easy as Boston pie. You've got to sail right in. I come along with the finesse later. Madelon ! "

She nodded understandingly.

" Uncle," she warned him, " remember that everything depends upon your playing your part properly. You want to have something to take to the Casino to-morrow, don't you ? "

The Marquis breathed a deep sigh. He seemed to be able to visualize the moment of suspense, the click of the ball falling into its niche, the croupier's monotonous announcement. He drew himself up.

"I am a man of honour," he declared. "I shall not fail you. Let us start at once."

OUTSIDE the Café de Paris, seated before the most conspicuous table, and looking larger than ever, they found the lady of whom they were in search. Mr. Billingham marched boldly up.

"Mrs. Block," he said, "my friend the Marquis de Félan has asked me to present him. The Marquis de Félan—Mrs. Block—also Miss de Félan, the Marquis's niece."

Mrs. Block was fluttered but gratified. The Marquis rose splendidly to the occasion. He kissed her pudgy fingers with an air which evoked her wondering admiration, and, accepting a chair by her side, he plunged at once into a conversation of a more or less intimate nature. He played the host to the little gathering, ordering refreshments and paying for them with an air of great liberality. After a time Mr. Billingham rose tentatively to his feet.

"I guess Miss de Félan and I are going to walk along and see about that table for dinner," he announced. "We'll find you here when we come back, or else meet in the Casino."

Mrs. Block smiled gracefully; the Marquis for a moment felt his heart sink, but he stuck to his guns.

"A very delightful man, Mr. Billingham," the lady remarked, looking after his departing figure.

The Marquis nodded without enthusiasm.

"Why not?" he replied. "He has in the world all that he desires. He has money, and above all he has a facile disposition. It is a great thing, that! He makes friends easily. He never suffers from loneliness."

"And do you?" the lady asked, softly.

The Marquis sighed. He looked dreamily away towards the hills. He was quite at his best.

"All my life," he confided, "I have been lonely. I lost my wife when I was young. I was foolish not to re-marry. Now, alas, when it is too late, I feel the need of a companion."

"Why is it too late?" she inquired, tenderly.

"The women of to-day," the Marquis complained, "all prefer young men. Where should I find a woman attractive enough to be agreeable to me who would be willing to marry a man of fifty?"

"Very easily, I should think," Mrs. Block declared, with portentous emphasis. "But of course, if you want one of these young fly-away hussies——"

"But I do not," the Marquis interrupted. "I prefer a woman of—of experience. A woman," he went on, leaning a little towards her—"may I venture to say—of something like your age—thirty-eight or so."

It was a moment of ecstasy for Mrs. Block. She was wearing a gown in which she fondly believed that she resembled the mannequin from whom she had bought it. She was sitting alone with a Marquis and quite casually she had been taken for thirty-eight.

"How did you know my age?" she asked, almost archly.

"I am a great diviner of ages," he replied. "It is very seldom that I make a mistake."

"Well, then, I think there are very few women of my age, Marquis," the lady confided, "who would not be glad to try and bring a little sunshine into your life."

The Marquis sighed once more.

"A beautiful way of putting it!" he murmured. "You cheer me up, dear lady. May I," he added, significantly, "do myself the honour of calling upon you?"

Mrs. Block was more and more fluttered.

"Come this afternoon," she invited. "I have tea in my sitting-room at four o'clock. Mr. Billingham sometimes drops in, but this afternoon I shall say that I am engaged."

"Mr. Billingham is a great friend of yours, is he not?" the Marquis inquired, gloomily.

"Nothing special," was the indifferent reply. "We're friends in a way, of course, but he's not quite my fancy. By the by," she went on, "are you and your niece doing anything to-night?"

"Nothing of any consequence," the Marquis confessed.

"Come and dine at my hotel—the Hôtel de Paris," the lady begged eagerly. "Mr. Billingham's coming, and to tell you the truth, I'd just as soon not dine with him alone. He is very nice, but people do talk so, and when you've made up your mind as I have—well, I don't want to seem to be encouraging him. You *comprenez?*"

"*Parfaitement*," the Marquis assured her, with a little inward chuckle. "About half-past eight, I suppose. Permit me to escort you across the Place."

The Marquis strolled down the terrace to Ciro's a little later with the remains of a smile still lurking about his lips. He handed his coat and cane to an attendant and crossed the room confidently towards the table where Madelon and Mr. Billingham were already seated.

"My friend," he announced, "you no longer exist. I have achieved a great success. La belle Block is no more for you. I take tea with her in her *salon* this afternoon. You are to be told that she is engaged. We dine at the Hôtel de Paris to-night—Madelon and I. A million pounds!

It is incredible! One might be disposed to take this affair seriously."

Madelon shook her head.

"Impossible," she insisted. "You may eat her dinners and rob her if you will of that staggering jewellery, but more would not be possible."

The Marquis shivered a little as he glanced down the menu.

"You are right," he assented. "Besides, even if one had the courage, there would be disagreeable people like executors. You might find that there were difficulties about the money and settlements."

"The man who marries a woman like that," Mr. Billingham declared firmly, "would deserve what he got, and I guess we'll leave that out of the question. She's one of the people in the world, though, the Lord meant to be robbed. She goes about asking for it."

"The scheme itself is as yet scarcely clear to me," the Marquis murmured.

"Nor to me," Mr. Billingham confessed, attacking his *hors d'œuvre* vigorously. "The stuff's there all right, though, and we're going to touch it. Make the running as strong as you can this afternoon, my son. We'll get to work before the week's out."

The Marquis played with his eyeglass a little nervously.

"You will not suggest, of course, anything in the nature of—er—direct larceny?"

"Not I," Mr. Billingham acquiesced. "Jewel lifting's too difficult, and, besides, we ain't professionals. Something a little more subtle. I haven't got it quite fixed yet, but I'm not worrying any."

THE MARQUIS escaped from his afternoon tea entertainment, still triumphant but shattered. He drank a large whisky and soda at the bar of the Sporting Club before he felt sufficiently recovered to make his appearance in the rooms. By dinner-time, however, he was entirely himself again. He sat at Mrs. Block's right hand, and endured stoically the pressure of her immense foot. The burden of conversation devolved mainly upon him, for Mr. Billingham was noticeably silent and, for him, almost morose.

"Jealous!" his hostess whispered to the Marquis as they left the dining-room. "Jealous of you, dear!"

The Marquis felt his fingers lightly pressed and received a languishing glance.

"You have encouraged him," he rejoined.

"Not more than the others," she declared airily and mendaciously peopling her environment with the forms of many suitors. "Men are so difficult nowadays," she sighed, "A beautiful woman has always her embarrassments," the Marquis sympathized.

The evening progressed according to plan. The little party had made their way to the Sporting Club, but Mr. Billingham, becoming more and more silent and depressed, presently withdrew. Madelon followed shortly afterwards and in a little voiture they drove to the Carlton. Mr. Billingham's depression had vanished as though by magic.

"Say, your uncle is getting away with this fine!" he declared. "It took me a week to get where he's got in less than a day. He's got the knack of it."

Madelon was looking up at the moon. Mr. Billingham was suddenly conscious that the night held a charm which was not altogether pagan. The sky was perfectly clear, the music from the *cafés* reached them faintly, in the dim light the crowds of moving people were like shadows.

"After all," she murmured, "it is rather terrible."

"I don't quite get you," her companion confessed.

"Having to live like this," she explained. "This living on one's wits. The insecurity of it is horrible. Sometimes it is amusing, it appeals to one's sense of humour, but it destroys one's dignity. In time we shall all three become really bad."

"Not you," Mr. Billingham rejoined softly.

"Why not me?" she asked, turning abruptly and looking at him. "What do you suppose will be the end of me?"

"I guess you'll marry."

"Who would marry anyone like me—who worth marrying?" she demanded, with a little note almost of passion in her tone. "Of course I want to marry—every girl does. I want a home of my own and a man to look after me. What sort of a husband do you think I am likely to find living this kind of a life?"

Mr. Billingham, too, was very serious.

"I guess it's hard on you," he admitted, taking her hand in his.

"It is hard on all of us, I suppose."

"Say, shall we lay off for a bit?" he suggested. "I can make money on the square. There's my old company. They'd have me back as a director."

She withdrew her fingers and patted his hand.

"You are very foolish," she said. "Of course you can make money. You are clever—but that would not help us. We could not live upon your charity. And yet without you we should probably slip back into helplessness."

Mr. Billingham leaned towards her and coughed. His voice was a little husky.

"Madelon!" he began.

She turned her head.

"Well?"

The carriage pulled up with a jerk outside the Carlton; the commissionaire threw open the door.

"Damn!" Mr. Billingham exclaimed.

AT supper-time Madelon became unexpectedly gay. She insisted upon dancing most of the time, and resisted any attempt at serious conversation.

"Of course you know that you dance absurdly well," she told him once. "You must be very fond of it."

"For a fat man," Mr. Billingham admitted, as he wiped his forehead, "I fancy I can move some. But dancing with you, Miss Madelon, is pretty easy going. Let's sit and talk for a bit now."

She shook her head.

"I could not," she objected. "To-night I am nervous. If I talk I shall weep. Go and fetch me that dancing instructor—the dark one. You will have to give him a hundred francs. I like that little side-step he does. You can either rest or try your fortune with the little danseuse."

Mr. Billingham obeyed orders so far as the dancing instructor was concerned, but made no effort towards securing the companionship of the little danseuse. Instead he leaned back in his corner and watched. He seemed to be watching all the room, but as a matter of fact his eyes never left Madelon. She was very simply dressed as usual, in a plain black georgette frock, but there seemed to be some new quality in her face—something a little haunting in her eyes, a dash almost of recklessness in her graceful movements. She danced like a devotee without a word to her partner. Once her eyes met Mr. Billingham's and she smiled, but even her smile seemed to possess an indefinable and unrealizable quality. As soon as the dance had finished she thanked her partner briefly and returned abruptly to the table.

"I want to go, please," she begged. "We will see how uncle is getting on."

Mr. Billingham paid his bill. They stepped outside and into a voiture. Mr. Billingham's voice was once more a little husky.

"Madelon!" he began.

She laid her hand for a moment on his.

"You must please not speak to me all the way back," she insisted. "And don't mind if I am a little foolish."

Her head disappeared between her hands. Once he saw her shoulders shiver as though she were sobbing. When they reached the Club, however, she sat up with a little weary smile. There were no signs of tears in her eyes.

"You see, after all I am not a finished adventuress," she said. "I am just a silly girl, who is liable to this sort of mood. I think being with this horrible woman has affected me to-night. I hate ugly things and ugly people. If we continue our life of crime I insist upon it that our next victim is not of this type."

MRS. BLOCK was, for her, almost nervous when on the following afternoon, in response to an urgent telephone call, she received a visit from Mr. Billingham. Mr. Billingham seemed to have lost entirely that spirit of bonhomie which he generally presented to the world. Even his attire was more sombre than usual. He shook hands without a smile and declined a chair.

"Annie," he said, using her Christian name boldly, "I have come for an explanation."

"What sort of an explanation?" she inquired, toying with her rope of pearls.

"I guess you know," was the stern reply. "We Americans don't waste words. You know very well you're engaged to marry me and you're flirting with my friend. It's got to stop right now!"

The situation had its embarrassments, but also its delights. Mrs. Block felt a thrill of joy as she once more invited her visitor to seat himself by her side. She had all the sensations of a heroine of some modern romance.

"Samuel," she said—"or, rather, Mr. Billingham, because I am not going to call you Samuel any longer—you will have to be very generous. I wish to break off our engagement. It was never announced, as you know."

"Because of the Marquis?" he demanded.

Mrs. Block admitted the fact.

"It's no use wasting words about it," she went on. "I promised to marry him last night. We're keeping the engagement secret for a fortnight, and then I'm going back to England to arrange my affairs."

"And what do you expect me to say?" Mr. Billingham asked.

"I expect you to be a dear and—give me up," she declared.

"I shall do nothing of the sort," he replied, firmly.

"You can't hold me to that promise," she insisted. "There's nothing on paper, anyway. You wouldn't have me marry you without loving you, Samuel?"

Mr. Billingham flinched but persevered.

"You are engaged to marry me," he

rejoined, doggedly. "I may not be an aristocrat like the Marquis; I may not even be so well off, but you promised."

Mrs. Block shook her head.

"I can't help that," she said. "If you don't like it you can—do the other thing. That's all there is to say about it. I'd rather be friends."

Mr. Billingham remained unmoved.

"I am not to be got rid of like that. I shall appeal to the Marquis himself," he threatened.

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"The Marquis is a man of honour," Mr. Billingham explained. "I shall go to him. I shall tell him the truth. I shall say, 'Mrs. Block was engaged to me. I introduced you as my friend. As a man of honour I require you to withdraw.' I know my friend," Mr. Billingham continued. "He will do as I desire. He will leave Monte Carlo the same day."

Mrs. Block was pale with anger. Her visitor's words carried conviction. The phrase "a man of honour" daunted her. In her fancy she could already see the Marquis seated with folded arms in his little voiture, with his portmanteau on the seat in front, on his way to the station.

"You must do nothing of the sort," she insisted.

"What is to prevent me?" he retorted. "Besides——"

"Besides what?" she interrupted, eagerly.

Mr. Billingham was shamefaced but determined.

"I am poor," he confessed. "I am tired of being poor. I have lost heavily at the tables."

Mrs. Block came up to the scratch at once.

"For how much money," she asked, "will you leave me and the Marquis alone?"

"Two thousand pounds," Mr. Billingham replied, without hesitation.

She was a little staggered, but she was a woman of action. She wrote out a cheque and handed it to him. He shook his head.

"It would take weeks to get the money for that," he pointed out.

Mr. Billingham leaned back in his corner and watched.

"They will cash it downstairs," she assured him.

"You get the money and bring it in mille notes," he insisted. "That's all I ask. You can marry the Marquis as soon as you like then."

She motioned him to a chair.

"Wait," she ordered.

In a quarter of an hour she returned, slightly breathless, with a great pile of mille notes in her hand.

"They had to send to the bank," she explained. "There's your money. Now you just leave me and the Marquis alone."

Mr. Billingham picked up his hat sadly.

"You may be choosing the better man, Annie," he said, "but this is a great disappointment to me."

Mrs. Block sneered a little. She was not really fond of parting with her money.

"You've got something to console yourself with," she snapped out. "Hurry off, please. I am expecting the Marquis at any moment."

THEREAFTER the Marquis played his part manfully for a week. At the end of that time he made an abrupt appearance as Mr. Billingham and Madelon were finishing their dinner in a secluded corner of the Sporting Club Restaurant. He had all the appearance of a man on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

Madelon danced like a devotee without a word to her partner.

"My friend," he exclaimed, sinking into a chair which a waiter had brought from a neighbouring table, "order me a liqueur brandy. This must cease. I have reached the limit."

Mr. Billingham wisely ordered a double liqueur brandy hastily and forbore to question his friend.

"I have stood the amused ridicule of a crowd of strangers," the latter went on. "I have put up with the agony of being drenched with intolerable perfumes, of listening to that strident voice, of——"

"Cut it out!" Mr. Billingham interrupted. "What's the trouble?"

The Marquis looked around him wildly.

"The lady," he confided, "is becoming amorous. She has held my hand, she has pressed my feet, until the thing has become monotonous. Now she has, I fear—other designs upon me."

The creases around Mr. Billingham's eyes began to deepen, his mouth quivered, his efforts at self-control became useless. He joined in Madelon's ecstatic outburst of amusement. When he had recovered sufficiently to wipe his eyes, the Marquis had drunk his brandy and was looking thoughtfully at the bottle.

"We dined," the Marquis explained, "at the Hôtel de Paris. She insisted—declared that it was too quiet here and that she wanted me alone. She wore white satin—not enough of it by yards. She wore jewellery which made the people blink when she came into the room. She sat next a party of your compatriots and she called me 'Marquis' at the top of her voice every few minutes. When at last I thought my hour of comparative release had arrived, she declared that she had a headache and would spend the evening in her sitting-room. She has ordered me to follow her. I am to return—to sit with her there alone! She has whispered in my ear that we are engaged."

Mr. Billingham made signs to the waiter, who filled the Marquis's glass.

"You've got to go through with it, Marquis," he declared.

"But what is to be the end?" the Marquis demanded, almost passionately. "People are beginning to smile when they see us together. Our engagement has even been announced in some of the papers. One day she will march me into a church or register office and I shall emerge a married man. She is masterful—overwhelming! What is your plan? It is time to announce it."

Mr. Billingham reflected.

"There have been a few little pickings," he mused.

"It is true," the Marquis assented. "I have jewellery for the first time for many

years; pearl studs like blobs and some sapphire sleeve links and waistcoat buttons which are admirable. These things are so much to the good, but I cannot go on collecting them. There is a certain definiteness," he added, "in the woman's intentions towards me this evening which is horrible."

Madelon, wiping the tears from her eyes, leaned forward.

"There must be a rescue party," she suggested.

"I agree," Mr. Billingham assented. "In ten minutes your sufferings shall be at an end; temporarily, at any rate. I will find some excuse. We will break in upon you."

"With that promise and under those conditions," the Marquis said, "I will return."

THE MARQUIS kept his word and Mr. Billingham carried out his share of the bargain. In less than a quarter of an hour he presented himself at the sitting-room of Mrs. Block's gorgeous suite. He was immediately aware of tragical happenings. The Marquis, looking a little dazed, was standing upon the hearthrug. Mrs. Block, grasping a telegraphic despatch in her hand, was in a state almost of collapse upon the sofa. The new-comer looked from one to the other.

"I regret my inevitable intrusion," he began. "Monsieur le Duc, the Marquis's father, has telephoned from Nice."

Mrs. Block banged the end of the sofa with her fist.

"Confound you all—dukes and marquises and the lot of you!" she cried. "Tom will smash you when he comes and he'll kill me. What a fool I've been!"

"Say, who is this 'Tom,' anyway?" Mr. Billingham demanded.

"My husband!" Mrs. Block declared, dramatically.

"Her husband!" the Marquis murmured under his breath, with a beatific smile.

Mrs. Block rose to her feet. She was, after all, a woman of force and determination.

"Look here, you two," she confessed, "this is the long and short of it. I'm no widow. My husband's hale and hearty, though he's sixty years old. I've been down here three years, and a lone woman doesn't get the show she ought to. She wants someone attached to her. I guess I lost my head a bit. I wanted a man along, and I chose the simplest way of getting one. Now it's got put in the papers about me and the Marquis, my old man's seen it, and he'll be here tomorrow morning at twelve-thirty. Years ago," she went on, with a livid little shadow of memory blanching her face, "he used to beat me. He'd think nothing of doing it again, and as to any man he's ever run up against—well, he's made short work of him. 'Fighting Tom' they used to call him. Don't stand there looking like nincompoops, both of you! What are you going to do?"

The Marquis duly interpreted a glance from Mr. Billingham.

"I shall consult with my friend," he said. "You have treated me very badly, madame."

"Following upon your treatment of me," Mr. Billingham added, meaningly, "the situation becomes a grave one. With your permission, we will call upon you at half-past ten to-morrow morning."

"Let's have it out now," the lady begged.

Mr. Billingham shook his head.

"At half-past ten," he repeated. "Come along, Marquis!"

Mrs. Block had not strength to argue. The two men took a dignified leave of her.

AT half-past ten on the following morning a very altered Mrs. Block received her two visitors. She was wearing a plainly-made gown, her pudgy face was devoid of its artificial colour, her eyebrows appeared to have lost their shape, and nothing but a cascade of jewellery remained of her previous magnificence. She scarcely waited for them to sit down.

"Well?" she demanded, eagerly.

Mr. Billingham coughed.

"The Marquis desires to know your wishes, madame," Mr. Billingham announced stiffly.

"What I want him to do is to clear out," the lady declared. "If Tom's seen that bit in the paper about the Marquis and me—which he must have done, as he's never left England before in his life—he'll hunt this place until he's found him, and then there'll be trouble. I shall tell him that the whole thing is a bit of newspaper stuff, that I don't know any Marquis, that I haven't any friends here at all."

"I gather that you desire the Marquis to leave Monte Carlo," Mr. Billingham observed.

"This morning," was the prompt assent. "I want him out of the way before Tom starts making inquiries."

"You will understand, I am sure," his friend continued, "that for a man fixed like the Marquis, with a whole heap of social engagements, this is some sacrifice."

"It is intolerable!" the Marquis interposed. "I shall lose my roulette, my rooms are taken for another month—I lose, also, more than I can express," he added, with a little bow.

"Confound you all—dukes and marquises and the lot of you!" she cried. "Tom will smash you when he comes and he'll kill me. What a fool I've been!"

"You can cut that out," was the blunt retort. "You may or you may not have been in earnest, but I'm not going to believe that you're going to break your heart. Will you go or won't you?"

"I prefer to remain," the Marquis announced, coldly. "If your husband desires satisfaction, I shall be at his service."

Mrs. Block laughed. It was not exactly a laugh of humour, but it was the first time her features had relaxed.

"Tom's idea of 'satisfaction' would be to knock you into a jelly," she confided—"and he'd do it, too."

"I await the arrival of monsieur," the Marquis repeated, haughtily.

"Look here, madame," Mr. Billingham intervened. "I guess we're wasting time. The Marquis is like myself—a man of moderate means. After losing a small fortune, he's struck a vein of luck, and he's winning every day at the tables here. His rooms are taken for another month, and he'll have to pay for them. If you want him to quit for your convenience, you must talk business about it."

"O-ho!" the lady exclaimed. "So that's the game, is it? I'm beginning to wonder," she added, suspiciously, "whether the Marquis isn't another of your kidney."

The Marquis picked up his hat and coat.

"The interview is at an end," he declared. "I find the attitude of madame outrageous."

Mrs. Block sprang up and barred his exit.

"Don't be silly," she enjoined. "Your friend knows what he's talking about. How much do you want to clear out of Monte Carlo before half-past twelve, not show yourself here for at least a week, and deny you ever set eyes on me if Tom finds you out?"

"My friend will arrange such a matter," the Marquis replied, icily. "I have no head for figures myself. These moves are very expensive."

"The Marquis will leave by the twelve o'clock train to Nice," Mr. Billingham promised, "for the sum of two thousand pounds."

Mrs. Block looked from one to the other of the two men. There were times when she was a very ugly woman, and this was one of them.

"I believe you two," she began, "are nothing more or less——"

Mr. Billingham held out his hand with a warning gesture, and the woman, with an effort, held her tongue. The Marquis threw his card upon the table.

"Present this with my compliments to your husband, madame," he begged. "I shall remain in this afternoon."

The woman leaned over the table, tore up the card savagely, and threw the fragments into the fire. Then she crossed the room, unlocked a drawer, and produced a thick wad of mille notes. She counted them out in piles of tens. At a hundred thousand she paused. Mr. Billingham shook his head.

"The exchange to-day," he reminded her, dryly. . . .

She flung down another four packets. The Marquis picked them up with well-assumed nonchalance. His fingers trembled a little, however, as he thrust the entire roll into his breast coat-pocket.

"I've been a damned fool," the woman confessed, "and I suppose I've got to pay for it."

"Fools always pay," Mr. Billingham murmured, as he picked up his hat and cane. "We have the honour, madame!"

"The deep regret!" the Marquis echoed.

"Go to blazes!" was the lady's valedictory remark.

MADELON and Mr. Billingham that night, being in a festive mood, dined at the Hôtel de Paris. They were still considering the matter of *hors d'œuvre* when a *maître d'hôtel* ushered in some late arrivals. Mr. Billingham glanced up casually, but his eyes remained transfixed. Madelon slightly turned her head. Mrs. Block, in one of her most gorgeous frocks, was sailing through the room. Behind her was a small, ill-made man of about five feet seven, with sandy hair, unpleasant complexion, bushy eyebrows, narrow, suspicious eyes, and a very acquisitive mouth. He was badly dressed, and he had the clumsy presence and the assertive manners of a stranger to such places. The *maître d'hôtel*, who had been talking to Madelon, smiled.

"It is the husband of the wealthy lady from Leeds in England," he confided. "He arrived this morning."

"Fighting Tom!" Mr. Billingham gasped.

(*Next month: "The Café of Terror."*)

Confessions of a Humorist—

By

JEROME K. JEROME

PART II.

How "Three Men in a Boat" came to be written—The evolution of Montmorency—The originals of "The Three Men"—Stories of Pett Ridge, Marie Corelli, I. Zangwill, W. S. Gilbert, and J. M. Barrie—"Paul Kelver," the book I best liked writing.

"THREE Men in a Boat. To say nothing of the dog," I wrote at Chelsea Gardens, up ninety-seven stairs. But the view was worth it. We had a little circular drawing-room—I am speaking now as a married man—nearly all window, suggestive of a light-house, from which we looked down upon the river, and over Battersea Park to the Surrey hills beyond, with the garden of old Chelsea Hospital just opposite. Fourteen shillings a week we paid for that flat: two reception-rooms, three bedrooms, and a kitchen. One was passing rich in those days on three hundred a year. I had known Chelsea Gardens for some time. Rose Norreys, the actress, had a flat there, and gave Sunday afternoon parties. She was playing then at the Court Theatre with Arthur Cecil and John Clayton. Half young Bohemia used to squeeze itself into her tiny drawing-room, and overflow into the kitchen. Bald or grey-headed they are now, those of them that are left. Bernard Partridge and myself were generally the last to leave. One could not help loving her. She was a strange spiritual little creature. I was rehearsing a play at the Vaudeville Theatre, when a boy slipped into my hand the last letter I had from her. The boy never said whom it was from; and I did not open it till the end of the act, some two hours later. It was written in pencil, begging me to come to her at once. She had rooms in Great Portland Street. A small crowd was round the door when I got there; and I learned she had just been taken away to Colney Hatch Asylum. I never could bring myself to go and see her there. She had kind women friends—Mrs. Jopling Rowe, the artist, was one—who watched over her. She died there a little while ago, I think.

I did not intend to write a funny book, at first. I did not know I was a humorist. I never have been sure about it. In the Middle Ages I should probably have gone about preaching and got myself burnt or hanged. There was to be "humorous relief"; but the book was to have been "The Story of the Thames," its scenery and history. Somehow it would not come. I was just back from my honeymoon, and had the feeling that all the world's troubles were over. About the "humorous relief" I had no difficulty. I decided to write the "humorous relief" first—get it off my chest, so to speak. After which, in sober frame of mind, I could tackle the scenery and history. I never got there. It seemed to be all "humorous relief." By grim determination I succeeded, before the end, in writing a dozen or so slabs of history and working them in, one to each chapter; and F. W. Robinson, who was publishing the book serially in *Home Chimes*, promptly slung them out, the most of them. From the

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beginning he had objected to the title and had insisted upon my thinking of another. And half-way through I hit upon "Three Men in a Boat" because nothing else seemed right.

There wasn't any dog. I did not possess a dog in those days. Neither did George. Nor did Harris. As a boy I had owned pets innumerable. There was a baby water-rat I had caught in a drain. He lived most of his time in my breast pocket. I would take him to school with me; and he would sit with his head poking out between my handkerchief and my coat, so that nobody could see him but myself, and look up at me with adoring eyes. Next to my mother, I loved him more than anybody in the world. The other boys complained of him after a time, but I believe it was only jealousy. I never smelt anything. And then there was a squirrel—an orphan—that I persuaded a white rabbit to adopt, until he bit one of his foster-brothers; and a cat that used to come to the station to meet me. But it never ran to a dog. Montmorency I evolved out of my inner consciousness. There is something of the dog, I take it, in most Englishmen. Dog friends that I came to know later have told me he was true to life.

"To say nothing of the dog." Montmorency, the canine hero of "Three Men in a Boat"—drawn by Will Owen.

Indeed, now I come to think of it, the book really was a history. I did not have to imagine or invent. Boating up and down the Thames had been my favourite sport ever since I could afford it. I just put down the things that happened.

A few years ago I took some American friends who had been staying with me to see Oxford. We had left the house at eight o'clock, and had finished up with the Martyrs' Memorial at a quarter to seven. Looking back, I cannot think of anything we missed. I had said good-bye to them at the railway station. They were going on to Stratford. I was too exhausted to remember I had left the motor at the Randolph. There was a train going in the opposite direction to Stratford; and caring about nothing else, I took it. Just as it was starting there shot in a liver-coloured dog, followed by three middle-aged and important-looking gentlemen. The dog, a Chow, took the seat opposite to me. He had a quiet dignity about him. He struck me as more Chinese than dog. The other three spread themselves about. The eldest, and most talkative, was a Professor: anyhow, that's what they called him; added to which, he looked it. The stoutest of the three I judged to be connected with finance. It appeared that if the "A.G. group" did not put up fourteen millions by Friday he would have to go to town on Monday, and that would be a nuisance. I could not help overhearing and feeling sorry for him. At the period, I was worried over money matters myself. The third was a simple soul connected with Egyptology and a museum. I was dropping off to sleep when the train gave a lurch and the Professor suddenly said "Damn."

"Wish I'd never sat down on that corkscrew," remarked the Professor, while rubbing the place.

"If it comes to that," remarked the Financier, "there were one or two things that would have been all the better for your not sitting down upon them: tomatoes, for example."

I kept my eyes closed and listened. I learnt that, brain-fagged and desiring a new thing, they had hit upon the idea of hiring a boat at Kingston and pulling up the river. They were in reminiscent mood, and it was clear they had had trouble with their packing. They had started with a tent. For the first two nights they had slept in this tent—at intervals. The tent, it was evident, had shown no more respect for Philosophy and High Finance and Egyptology than for Youth and Folly. It had followed the law of its being; and on the third morning they had deliberately set fire to it and had danced round it while it burnt. They had bathed of mornings; and the Egyptologist, slipping on a banana rind, had dived before he intended and taken his pyjamas with him. They had washed their clothes in the river and afterwards given them away. They had sat hungry round hermetically-sealed luxuries, having forgotten the tin-opener. The Chow, whose name, it transpired, was Confucius, had had a row with a cat, and had scalded himself with the kettle.

From all of which it would appear that anyone who had thought of it could have written "Three Men in a Boat." Likely enough some troop of ancient Britons, camping

CARL HENTSCHEL. JEROME K. JEROME.

GEORGE WINGRAVE.

The originals of the "Three Men" in Jerome's famous book.

where now the Mother of Parliaments looks down upon old Thames, listened amused while one among them told of the adventures of himself and twain companions in a coracle: to say nothing of the wolf. Allowing for variation in unimportant detail, much the same sort of things must have happened. And in A.D. 30,000—if Earth's rivers still run—a boatload of Shaw's "ancients" will, in all probability, be repeating the experiment with similar results, accompanied by a dog five thousand years old.

George and Harris were likewise founded on fact. Harris was Carl Hentschel. I met him first outside a pit door. His father introduced photo-etching into England. It enabled newspapers to print pictures, and altered the whole character of journalism. The process was a secret then. Young Carl and his father, locking the back kitchen door and drawing down the blind, would stir their crucibles far on into the night. Carl worked the business up into a big concern, and we thought he was going to end as Lord Mayor. The war brought him low. He was accused of being a German. As a matter of fact he was a Pole. But his trade rivals had got their chance, and took it. George Wingrave, now a respectable bank manager, I met when lodging in Newman Street, and afterwards we chummed together in Tavistock Place, handy for the British Museum reading room: the poor students' club, as it used to be called.

We three would foregather on Sunday mornings and take the train to Richmond. There were lovely stretches then between Richmond and Staines, meadowland and cornfields. At first we used to have the river almost to ourselves; but year by year it got more crowded, and Maidenhead became our starting point. England in those days was still a Sabbath-keeping land. Often people would hiss us as we passed, carrying our hamper and clad in fancy "blazers." Once a Salvation Army lass dropped suddenly upon her knees in front of us and started praying. Tennis on Sundays was played only behind high walls, and golf had not come in. Bicycling was just beginning. I remember the indignation of a village publican, watching some lads just starting for a Sunday outing. "Look at them," he said; "they'll gad about all day like wooden monkeys on a stick, and won't get home till after closing time. God forgive 'em."

Sometimes we would fix up a trip of three

or four days or a week, doing the thing in style and camping out. Three, I have always found, makes good company. Two grows monotonous, and four or over breaks up into groups. Later on we same three did a cycle tour through the Black Forest: out of which came "Three Men on the Bummel" ("Three Men on Wheels," it was called in America). In Germany it was officially adopted as a school reading book. Another year we tramped the valley of the Upper Danube. That would have made an interesting book, but I was occupied writing plays at the time. It lingers in my memory as the best walk of all. We seemed to have mounted Wells's "Time-Machine" and slipped back into the Middle Ages. Railways and hotels had vanished. Bare-footed friars wandered, crook in hand, shepherding their flocks. Peering into the great barns, we watched the swinging of the iron flails. Yoked oxen drew the creaking wains. Outside the cottage doors, the women ground the corn between the querns. We slept in the great guest room side by side: tired men and women with their children, Jew pedlar, travelling acrobat. A knapsack on one's back and a stout staff in one's hand make joyous travelling. Your modern motor-car, rushing through history in a cloud of dust, is for Time's rich slaves. Even on the old push bicycle one is too much in a hurry. One sees the beauty after one has passed. One wonders: shall one get off and go back. Meanwhile, one goes on: it is too late. On foot, one leans one's arms upon the gate: the picture has time to print itself upon the memory. One falls into talk with cheery tinker, brother tramp, or village priest. The pleasant byway lures our willing feet: it may lead to mystery, adventure.

Another of our excursions was through the Ardennes. But that was less interesting: except for a strange combination of monastery and convent with a signpost outside it offering accommodation for man and beast; where monks did the cooking, and nuns waited, and the Abbess (at least, so I took her to be) made out the bill. It was in the 'nineties. If one asked one's way of the old folk, one spoke in French; but if of the young, one asked in German and was answered cheerfully. On the whole, one gathered that the peasants were nearer to Germany. It was in the towns that one found the French.

England in those days was still a Sabbath-keeping land. Often people would hiss us as we passed, and once a Salvation Army lass dropped suddenly upon her knees in front of us and started praying.

Subsequently Carl, busy climbing to that mayoral chair, deserted; and Pett-Ridge, who may be said to have qualified himself by afterwards marrying a sister of Carl, made our third. The only fault we found with him was that he never changed his clothes. Or if he did, it was to prove the truth of the French proverb: that the more things change, the more they remain the same. He would join us for a walking tour through the Tyrol or a tramp across Brittany wearing the same clothes in which we had last seen him strolling down the Strand on

his way to the Garrick Club: cut-away coat with fancy vest, grey striped trousers, kid boots buttoned at the side (as worn then by all the best people), spotless white shirt and collar, speckled blue tie, soft felt hat, and fawn gloves. I have tobogganed with Pett-Ridge amid the snows of Switzerland. I have boated with him. I have motored with him. Always he has been dressed in precisely those same clothes. He'll turn up at the Day of Judgment clothed like that: I feel sure of it. Possibly, out of respect to the Court, he will substitute a black tie.

We put up with him for the reason that he was—and always is—a most delightful companion. The worst one can say about his books is that they are not as good as his talk. If they were, we other humorists wouldn't have a look in.

"Three Men in a Boat" brought me fame, and had it been published a few years later would have brought me fortune also. As it was, the American pirate reaped a great reward. But I suppose God made him. Of course, it was damned by the critics. One might have imagined—to read some of

them—that the British Empire was in danger. One Church dignitary went about the country denouncing me. For years "New Humorist" was shouted after me wherever I wrote. Why in England, of all countries in the world, humour, even in new clothes, should be mistaken for a stranger to be greeted with brickbats bewildered me. It bewildered others. Zangwill, in an article on humour, has written:—

"There is a most bewildering habit in modern English letters. It consists in sneering down the humorist—that rarest of all literary phenomena. His appearance, indeed, is hailed with an outburst of gaiety; even the critics have the joy of discovery. But no sooner is he established and doing an apparently profitable business than a reaction sets in, and he becomes a byword for literary crime. When 'Three Men in a Boat' was fresh from the press, I was buttonholed by grave theologians and scholars hysterically insisting on my hearing page after page; later on these same gentlemen joined in the hue and cry and shuddered at the name of Jerome. The interval before the advent of another humorist is filled in with lamentations on the decay of humour."

There is more in the article my vanity would like to quote, but my modesty forbids. If few writers have been worse treated by the Press, few can have received more kindness from their fellow-workers. I recall a dinner given me on the eve of my setting out for a lecturing tour through America. Barrie was in the chair, I think—anyhow, in one of them. In the others were Conan Doyle, Barry Pain, Zangwill, Pett-Ridge, Hall Caine—some twenty in all. Everybody made a speech. I am supposed to be rather good at after-dinner speaking, but forgot everything I had intended to say that night. It all sounds very egotistical, but that is the danger of writing one's own biography.

I had got the habit of going about in threes. I wanted to see the Oberammergau Passion Play. The party was to have consisted of Eden Phillpotts, Walter Helmore, brother of the actor, and myself. Phillpotts and Helmore were then both in the Sun Insurance Office at Charing Cross. Phillpotts fell ill, and the Passion Play would not wait, so Helmore and I went alone. That was in 1890. One went to Oberammergau then in post-chaises, and there was only one hotel in the village. One lodged with the peasants and shared their fare. I visited there again a few years before the war. The railway had come, and the great hotels were crowded. The bands played, and there was dancing in the evening. Of course, I had written a book about it: "The Diary of a Pilgrimage"; so perhaps I am hardly entitled to indulge in jeremiads.

Helmore knew Germany well. We came

home through Bavaria and down the Rhine. It was my first visit to Germany. I liked the people and their homely ways, and later some four years' residence in Germany confirmed my first impressions.

Calmour was a frequent visitor of ours at Chelsea. He was secretary to W. G. Wills, who wrote blank verse plays for Henry Irving: "Charles I.," "Faust," and "The Vicar of Wakefield" among others. We had a fine old row in the pit on the first night of "Charles I." I was for Cromwell. I was training a pair of whiskers at the time, and a Royalist woman behind got hold of one of them and spoilt it. Wills was a bit of an oddity. He did not keep a banking account. He would take his money always in gold, and after paying what had to be would fling the remainder into a lumber room at the top of his house and double lock the door. Later on, when he needed cash—or when a friend did, which to Wills was much the same—he would unlock the door and on hands and knees grope about till he had collected sufficient, and then fasten up the door again.

Calmour was a playwright himself: "The Amber Heart" and "Cupid's Messenger" were his best known. He wrote also songs for "Lion Comiques," as they were called: "Champagne Charlie" and "The Ghost of John Benjamin Binns" were his. He never earned much money, but had learnt to do with less. He lived in one room in Sydney Street, and wrote in bed, not getting up as a rule till the evening. Bed, he used to say, was the cheapest place he knew. The moment you got up, expense began. He had a large circle of friends, and his dinners could have cost him but little. In later years he lived on a "system," which he took with him each winter to Monte Carlo. The difference between his system and most others was that in his case it really did work. He would stay there till he had in his pocket a hundred pounds over and above his expenses; and then, with rare strength of mind, would take the next train home. He had the reputation of being the guest that lingers too long. He knew of his failing, and settled the thing with my wife on his very first visit. I had not been present at their conversation, and was shocked when, the moment our grandfather's clock had finished striking twelve, my wife got up and said quite sweetly: "You must go now, Mr. Calmour. And please be sure to shut the bottom door." Before I could recover my astonishment, he had wished us good night and was gone. "It's all right," said my wife; "I think he's a dear."

W. S. Penley, the actor, often came. Eden Phillpotts and myself were writing him a play. Penley, like most comic actors, yearned to play serious parts. As a matter of fact, he would have played them very well. He could be both grotesque and tragic; and had naturally a rich, deep voice.

"It wouldn't be any good," he once said, in answer to my suggestion. "I should like to play Caliban, but they'd only think I was trying to give a comic imitation of something from the Zoo. If I'm out at dinner and ask a man to pass the mustard, he slaps his leg and bursts out laughing. Damned silly, I call it."

Gertrude Kingston with her mother and sister lived near by, in a charming little house in Ebury Street. Pinero's "Creamy English Rose" will always remain the beloved of the British theatrical public to the exclusion of all others, or Gertrude Kingston would long before now have been London's leading actress. She used to grumble at our ninety-seven stairs, but I persuaded her they were good for her figure, and, not altogether convinced, she would often climb them.

There were others: some still living and famous, some lost.

I REMEMBER a first night at the Vaudeville Theatre; a young actress who was playing her first big part was standing in the wings waiting her cue. She had a glass in her hand. Old Emily Thorne had just come off the stage. She stopped dead in front of the girl, blocking her way.

"Feeling in a tremble all over, aren't you?" suggested the elder woman.

"That just describes it," laughed the girl.

"And you find a little brandy pulls you together—steadies your nerves?"

"I doubt if I'd be able to go on without it," answered the girl.

Emily covered the girl's small hand with her own, and sent the contents of the glass flying. A wandering stage carpenter got most of it.

"I've known a good many promising young actresses," she said, "and half of them have ruined their career through drink. I've followed some of them to the grave. You learn to get on without it, child."

Henry Arthur Jones's brother had the flat beneath us. He was an acting manager, and called himself Sylvanus Dauncey.

Marie Corelli I came to know while living in Chelsea. I used to meet her at the house of an Italian lady, a Mme. Marras, in Prince's Gate. Marie was a pretty girlish little woman. We discovered we were precisely the same age. Mrs. Garrett Anderson, the first lady doctor, I think, to put up her plate in London, was sometimes of the party.

We used to play games: hunt the slipper, puss in the corner, and musical chairs. I can boast that more than once I sat on Marie Corelli's lap, though never for long. She was an erratic worker, and contracts would often get behind time. She lived with her adopted brother, Eric Mackay, son of the poet, and occasionally, when her agent would come to the house tearing his hair because of an instalment that editors were waiting for and that Marie did not feel like writing, they would take her up and lock her in her study; and when she had finished kicking the door, she would settle down and do a good morning's work.

To keep friends with her continuously was difficult. You had to agree with all her opinions, which were many and varied. I always admired her pluck and her sincerity. She died while I was writing this chapter.

ARTHUR MACHEN married a dear friend of mine, a Miss Hogg. How so charming a lady came to be born with such a name is one of civilization's little ironics. She had been a "first-nighter," and one of the founders of the Playgoers' Club, which was in advance of its time and admitted women members. Amy Hogg was also a pioneer. She lived by herself in diggings opposite the British Museum, frequented restaurants and Aerated Bread shops, and had many men friends: all of which was considered very shocking in those days. She had a vineyard in France, and sold the wine to the proprietor of the Florence Restaurant in Rupert Street. She had a favourite table by the window, and often she and I dined there and shared a bottle. The Florence, then, was a cosy little place where one lunched for one-and-three and dined for two shillings. One frequently saw Oscar Wilde there. He and his friends would come in late and take the table in the farther corner. Rumours were already going about, and his company did not tend to dispel them. One pretended not to see him. Machen when he was young suggested the Highbrow. He has developed into a benevolent-looking, white-haired gentleman. He might be one of the Brothers Cheeryble stepped out of "Nicholas Nickleby." For ability to create an atmosphere of nameless terror I can think of no author living or dead who comes near him. I gave Conan Doyle his "Three Impostors" to read one evening, and Doyle did not sleep that night.

"Your pal, Machen, is a genius right enough," said Doyle, "but I don't take him to bed with me again."

The memory lingers with me of the last time I saw his wife. It was a Sunday afternoon. They were living in Verulam Buildings, Gray's Inn, in rooms on the ground floor. The windows looked out on to the great quiet garden, and the rooks were cawing in the elms. She was dying, and Machen, with two cats under his arm, was moving softly about, waiting on her. We did not talk much. I stayed there till the sunset filled the room with a strange purple light.

The Thames was frozen over the last year we were in Chelsea. It was the first winter the gulls came to London. One listened to the music of the sleigh bells. Down the Embankment and round Battersea Park was the favourite course.

Friends of ours lived in St. John's Wood, and possessed gardens, some even growing roses and spring onions; and their boastings made us envious. Olga Nethersole had a cottage with real ivy and a porch. Lewis Waller had a mulberry tree; and one day I met Augustus Harris carrying a gun. He told me he had bought it to shoot rabbits at his "little place" off the Avenue Road. We found an old-fashioned house behind a high wall in Alpha Place. Bret Harte was near by. He lived with great swells named Van der Velde. The old gentleman, I think, was an ambassador, and the wife an American lady who had known Bret Harte when he was young, or something of that sort. Bret Harte remained with them as their guest till he died. He had his own suite of rooms. His hair was golden when we first knew him, but as the years went by it turned to silver. He was a slight, dapper gentleman, courteous and shy, with a low, soft voice. It was difficult to picture him ruffling it among the blood-stained sentimentalists of Roaring Camp and Dead Man's Gulch.

Zangwill and his family were denizens of the Wood. His brother Louis also wrote books, calling himself "Z. Z." "The World and a Man" remains the best-known of them. Zangwill was accused of being a "New Humorist." He edited a comic journal called *Ariel*, and discovered the "English Shakespeare." Shakespeares were being discovered everywhere just then. J. T. Grein, the dramatic critic, had discovered a Dutch Shakespeare, and another critic, not to be outdone, had dug up one in Belgium. In the end, every country in Europe was found to possess a Shakespeare, except England. Zangwill did not see why England should be left out, and discovered one in Brixton. Judging from the extracts Zangwill published, he certainly seemed as good as any of the others. The Bacon stunt was in full swing about the same time; and again it was Zangwill who discovered that Shakespeare's plays had all been written by another gentleman of the same name. I first met Mrs. Zangwill at a dinner. She was Miss Ayrton then, daughter of the

Professor, and had been assigned to me. It is not often that one offends a woman by taking her to be younger than she really is; but I quite offended her that evening. She looked fifteen, and I did my best to adapt myself accordingly. I have a youthful side to me, and flattered myself for a time that I was doing well. Suddenly she asked me my age, and, taken aback, I told her.

"Well, if you are all that," she answered, "why talk as if you were fourteen?"

It seemed she was quite grown up. She told me her own age. She evidently thought it a lot, but, anyhow, it was more than I had given her credit for; and after that we found we had plenty of interests in common. I have always thought how wonderfully alike she and Lady Forbes-Robertson are in appearance. I hope neither of them will be offended, but one can never tell. I was assured once, by a mutual friend, that I reminded him tremendously of Mr. Asquith; and then he added, as an afterthought: "But don't ever tell him I said so."

ZANGWILL is, and always has been, a strong personality. You either like him immensely or want to hit him with a club. Myself I have always had a sincere affection for him. We have in common a love of Lost Causes and Under-Dogs. He confessed to me once that he had wasted half his life on Zionism. I never liked to say so to him, but it always seemed to me that the danger threatening Zionism was that it might be realized. Jerusalem was the Vision Splendid of the Jewish race—the Pillar of Fire that had guided their footsteps across the centuries of shame and persecution. So long as it remained a dream, no Jew so poor, so hunted, so despised, but hugged to his breast his hidden birthright—his great inheritance to be passed on to his children. Who in God's name wanted a third-rate provincial town on a branch of the Bagdad railway? Most certainly not the Zionists. Their Jerusalem was, and must of necessity always have remained, in the clouds—their Promised Land the other side of the horizon. When the British Government presented Palestine to the Jews, it shattered the last hope of Israel. All that remains to be done now is to invite contracts for the rebuilding of the Temple.

The London Jew's progress, a Rabbi once informed me, is mapped out by three landmarks: Whitechapel, Maida Vale, and Park Lane. The business Jew is no better than his Christian competitor. The artistic Jew I have always found exceptionally simple and childlike. Of these a good many had escaped from Maida Vale, and crossing the Edgware Road had settled themselves in St. John's Wood. Solomon J. Solomon had his studio off Marlborough Road. He was, I think, the first artist to paint by electric light—a useful accomplishment in foggy London. He started to paint my portrait once, while staying with us at Pangbourne, but complained I had too many faces. At one moment I looked a murderer and the next a saint, according to him. I have the thing as he left it unfinished. It reminds me of someone, but I can't think whom. De Laszlo had the same trouble with me not long ago, but got over it by luring me to talk about myself. In his portrait there is a touch of the enthusiast.

Cowen, the composer, had a big house in Hamilton Terrace, and used to give delightful concerts. Sarah Bernhardt hired a house one spring. She brought a pet leopard with her: a discriminating beast, according to the local tradesmen. It dozed most of its day in front of the kitchen fire, and, so long as errand-boys confined themselves to the handing in of harmless provisions, would regard them out of its half-closed eyes with a friendly, almost benevolent expression. But if any one of them presented an envelope and showed intention of waiting for an answer, it would suddenly spring to its feet and give vent to a blood-curdling growl that would send the boy flying down the garden.

The first time I met her was at one of Irving's first-night suppers on the stage of the Lyceum: a forlorn, somewhat insignificant little figure without a word of English. Nobody knew her. (They were informal gatherings. You just showed your card and walked on to the stage.) The only thing she would take was a glass of wine. I wanted to introduce her, but she was evidently hurt at not having been recognized and made a fuss of. She complained of a headache, and I got her a cab. There were tears in her eyes, I noticed, as I shut the door.

Joseph Hatton had a house with a big garden in the Grove End Road, and gave Sunday afternoon parties. One met a motley crowd—peers and painters, actors and thought-readers, kings from Africa, escaped prisoners, journalists, and socialists. It was there that I first heard prophecy of Labour governments and votes for women. Stepniak, the Russian Nihilist, was a frequent visitor; a vehement, dark man, with an angelic smile. I met him one Sunday afternoon in an omnibus. We walked together from Uxbridge Road to Bedford Park. We were bound for the same house. The way then was through a dismal waste land, and the path crossed the North London Railway on the level. We had passed the

One day I met Augustus Harris in St. John's Wood carrying a gun. He told me he had bought it to shoot rabbits at his "little place" off the Avenue Road.

wicket gate. Stepniak was deep in talk, and did not notice an approaching train till I plucked him by the sleeve. He stood still staring after it for quite a time; and was silent for the rest of the way. The following Sunday he was killed there by the same train. He had betrayed some secret, it was said, to the Russian police, and had been given the choice between suicide or denunciation. The truth was never known.

W. S. Gilbert was a good talker. A strain of bitterness developed in him later, but in the 'nineties he was genial. I remember Miss Fortescue explaining that the Greeks had a custom of carving speeches on their seats. It seemed there was a term for these which she had forgotten. She appealed to Gilbert: "What were they called?" "Arrière-Pensée, I expect," replied Gilbert. He told us of a new dramatist just discovered by an American manager with whom he had been lunching. The manager had almost despaired of words with which to describe his prodigy. At last he had hit upon an inspiration: "I'll tell you what he is," explained the manager, "he's Mr. Barrie"—there followed an impressive pause—"with humour."

Barrie could easily be the most silent man I have ever met. Sometimes he would sit through the whole of a dinner without ever speaking. Then, when all but the last one or two guests had gone—or even later—he would put his hands behind his back and, bummeling up and down the room, talk for maybe an hour straight on end. Once a beautiful but nervous young lady was handed over to his care. With the *sole au gratin*, Barrie broke the silence:—

"Have you ever been to Egypt?"

The young lady was too startled to answer immediately. It was necessary for her to collect herself. While waiting for the *entrée*, she turned to him.

"No," she answered.

Barrie made no comment. He went on with his dinner. At the end of the chicken *en casserole*, curiosity overcoming her awe, she turned to him again.

"Have you?" she asked.

A far-away expression came into Barrie's great deep eyes.

"No," he answered.

After that they both lapsed into silence.

He and my wife found birds and animals a subject of never-failing wonder. I remember his explaining to her how much more intelligent lambs are than is generally

supposed. He was thinking out a story, and coming to a stile had sat down and was making notes on the back of an envelope. Barrie rarely wasted an envelope in those days. John Hare told me—to account for his having rejected "The Professor's Love Story"—that half of it was written on the inside of old envelopes. "Half" I doubt, but an eighth to a sixteenth I can well believe. Barrie was then an unknown youngster. "How could I guess the fool was a genius?" growled Hare. "Took him, of course, for a lunatic." But to return to our muttons.

In the field where Barrie sat there were lambs. One of them strayed away from its mother, turned round three times, and was lost. It was in a terrible to-do, and Barrie had to put down his story and lead it back to its mother. Hardly had he returned to his stile before another lamb did just the same. The bleating was terrific. There was nothing else to do but for Barrie to put down his work and take it back to its mother. They kept on doing it, one after another. But the wonderful thing was that after a time, instead of looking for their mothers themselves, they just came to Barrie and insisted on his coming with them and finding their mothers for them. It saved their time, but wasted Barrie's.

Barrie was always the most unassuming of men, but he could be touchy. On one occasion a great lady invited him to her castle in the country. The house-party was a large one. There were peers and potentates, millionaires and magnates. Barrie found himself assigned to a small room in a turret leading to the servants' quarters. Perhaps the poor lady could not help it, and was doing her best. Barrie did not say anything, but in the morning he was gone. No one had seen him leave, and the doors were still bolted. He had packed his bag and climbed out of the window.

The Great Central Railway turned me out of Alpha Place to make way for their new line to London. A chasm yawns where it once stood; a pleasant house with a long dining-room and a big drawing-room looking out upon a quiet garden. When friends came my wife liked to receive them in the hall—she was a slip of a young thing then—standing on the bottom stair to make herself seem taller. Wells was a shy, diffident young man in those days. Rider Haggard a somewhat solemn gentleman taking himself always very seriously. Mrs. Barry Pain was the only one of us who would venture to chaff him. George Moore was a simple, kindly soul when off his guard, but easily mistaken, by those who did not know him, for a poseur; he had the Balfour touch. Clement Shorter and his first wife, Dora Sigerson, the poetess; George Gissing, with his nervous hands and his deep voice; Hall Caine, Conan Doyle, Hornung—but the list only grows. I had better leave them over to another chapter, lest I seem garrulous.

From St. John's Wood we went to Mayfair—to a little house, one of a row at the end of a *cul-de-sac* overlooking Hyde Park. George Alexander had told me of it. He had number four. It was there I first met Mark Twain. Hardly anyone knew he was in London. He was living poorly, saving money to pay off the debts of a publishing firm with which he had been connected—Walter Scott's story over again. Our children had met at a gymnasium. I found there were two Mark Twains: the one a humorist, the other a humanitarian, reformer poet. About these two there was this that was curious: the humorist was an elderly gentleman, dull-eyed, with a slow, monotonous drawl; while the humanitarian, reformer, poet was an eager young man with ever-changing eyes and a voice full of tenderness and passion.

THEY say a man always returns to his first love. I never cared for the West-end: well-fed, well-dressed, uninteresting. The East, with its narrow silent streets, where mystery lurks; its noisome thoroughfares, teeming with fierce varied life, became again my favourite haunt. I discovered "John Ingerfield's" wharf near to Wapping Old Stairs, and hard by the dingy railed-in churchyard where he and Anne lie buried. But more often my wanderings would lead me to the little drab house off the Burdett Road, where "Paul Kelver" lived his childhood.

Of all my books I liked writing "Paul Kelver" the best. Maybe because it was all about myself and people I had known and loved.

It changed my luck so far as the critics were concerned. Francis Gribble, God bless him, gave me praise—the first I had ever tasted, and others followed.

I ought, of course, to have gone on. I might have become an established novelist—even a best-seller. Who knows? But having "got there," so to speak, my desire was to get away. I went back to the writing of plays. It was the same at the beginning of me. My history repeats itself. Having won success as a humorist, I immediately became serious. I have a kink in my brain, I suppose. I can't help it.

(To be continued.)

The PRIMITIVE

by

JOHN RUSSELL

Author of "WHERE THE PAVEMENT ENDS."

ILLUSTRATED BY S. SEYMOUR LUCAS

CORONER'S jury brought in a verdict, "Suicide under great mental stress." To which the magistrate added a comment of his own. The magistrate, it might be observed by way of extenuation, in his leisure hours was a leading spirit of the Perth and Westralian Philosophical Society. Probably it was a taste partly philosophic and partly Westralian which moved him to deal with the story as reported in the Press :—

"This is a sad case for such a day as ours. A young woman of sensitive and timid character was driven to take her life to escape an intolerable persecution. Living unprotected in the absence of her husband, a seafarer, she was subjected to siege by a man skilled in seduction. Evidently by evil arts he succeeded in compromising her among her neighbours so that she was publicly shamed and outcast. Alone and friendless, dreading the certainty of her husband's suspicion and distracted by a rascal's relentless pursuit, at length she put an end to everything. Her pitiful letter tells us all. It is true that, although the man stands morally guilty of murder, there seems no way of punishing him by our modern code. Nevertheless it is to be deplored that under conditions of social security in our thriving young metropolis of civilized citizens and happy homes (*sic*) anyone should still feel compelled to appeal to the primitive proof by death," etc., etc.

When Joe Grimshaw returned from winter cruise a month later, when he came hurrying up Forsyth Street with his wages in his pocket and joy in his heart, this was the sort of language by which a quiet, efficient, hard-working little chap had to learn the tragedy of his life.

We may suppose it was somewhat lost upon Joe ; such being the common failure of philosophy when it dabbles in raw soul-stuff and the bed-rock dramas of other people. But it had to serve. No one interpreted for him. No one aided him with word or gesture. The civilized and happy neighbours had perhaps been rendered shy by the attention already directed to them. They kept carefully out of sight, peeping through their respectable valances. Until, as Joe paused outside his own gate and looked up in blank astonishment at the close shutters and the dusty, dead flowers that drooped forlornly from the neglected window-boxes, somebody at last had the courage, the pity, or the cruelty, as may be, to step over and slip the newspaper clipping into his hand.

He read it, standing there. Afterwards he entered the cottage, groping a bit. An hour after that he came out again. There was only one change about him so far as anyone could see. He had arrived in his best clothes, his holiday rig, with the rest of his kit in a bag—he "always 'ad been a neat dresser around the 'ouse, that Joe." But when he reappeared he wore his working outfit, with the cap pulled low over his eyes.

He locked the door behind him. He passed through the gate and latched it. He did not rush up-hill toward the lodgings where Simon Darlington had lived—the

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neighbours were disappointed: they rather hoped he might. But quite as if he were going off to work as usual, he turned away from his empty dwelling down toward the tram-line, and departed. And that was the last Forsyth Street saw of him for eleven months.

It took him something more than five of those months to light on Simon Darlington's track.

There was nothing theatric about his search; there was nothing theatric about Joe Grimshaw anyway—he swore no oaths and made no gestures. These things are left to philosophers and their notions of how men ought to act. Joe buckled down to a slow and difficult game. With the whole merchant shipping of Australasia to sift by hand, he had first to eliminate the local coastwise lines, the Fremantle, Albany, and Adelaide steamers—even harbour boats and such agencies and pubs as mostly are frequented by the sea-going tribe.

If he ever troubled to consider the point he must have been perfectly well assured that Simon would never linger in or near Western Australia—for sure, never within reach of Perth itself. But Joe knew only one way of going about any job; the patient, quiet, tight-lipped way which had raised him without luck or favour from the stoke-hold to a second engineer's ticket. This was the way he went about his quest, like a hound circling out and out from a given start, overlooking no single chance. And one day at Port Melbourne he struck the slot, as he had been bound to strike it.

A friend on the Hobart run told of seeing Darlington in Tasmania that season, head-tinker on an island ferry. To Tasmania, then, followed Joe Grimshaw. It proved a good lead: at Hobart he was only three weeks too late—Simon had chucked his billet and gone a-travelling. At Launceston Joe gained another week. Back in Melbourne he actually passed his man, who had doubled on his trail; and at Sydney he made the narrowest miss—Simon Darlington had landed in Sydney no better than a jump ahead. But it was a jump long enough in which to vanish. Perhaps he had had direct warning; perhaps he had developed the instinct of the hunted. At any rate, he was off again—off to a clean break this time, without leaving a trace.

JOE thought it out all one morning on the quay. It is reasonable to suppose the hunter may develop an instinct as well as the quarry. The upshot was that he took passage with nearly the last of his money for Auckland, N.Z. And there in a certain house, in a certain street not far off Freeman's Bay, he visited a certain girl.

"Who? Si Darling?" It was a part with the sordid, flashy quarters and the paint on her round, fisher-girl cheeks that she should use that atrocious trick of name. "How's a' wi' him? And did he send y' here himself?" She came bouncing out to peer at Joe under the reeking oil-lamp, but something about the motionless, waiting figure stopped her short. "What brings you spierin' after him, laddie?"

He mumbled an answer.

"Sit down anyway and tell us about it for auld sake's sake. Any fren' o' Si's——"

She laid a paw on his shoulder; and then presently she plucked it away again. She ought to have been hefting fish-baskets in some honest Scots village, but she had a shrewdness, too—the cunning taught by cheap Colonial vice. "I'm no' keepin' a register," she warned him. "Sure, I used to know the man you name. Three year ago. I've never seen him since. Is that all you wanted o' me?"

Well, Joe began to put up a yarn. He did not do it well; as a matter of fact, he did it very badly. Which was fortunate for Joe and the best possible play he could have made. The girl sized him up as he stood there, twisting his cap awkwardly—not at all a dangerous-looking specimen. She sized him up three parts wrong, of course, misled by the theatrical lack beforementioned about this reserved little fellow with his slight build and white skin and neat blue-black moustache. And the next thing was she had to try some philosophy of her own. That was what it amounted to.

"Laddie," she said, patronizing, half-contemptuously, "dinna try to lie to a wumman wi' eyes in y'r head like yours. And tak' my advice and drop it. Whatever he owes y', forget it. Simon—he's a rough man; he'd make three of you. A bold, strong, hot-blooded man. If you ever did follow him 'twould be to a gey rough place and a gey rough business—far, far from folks and housen. No kind of a place for you. Now mind what I tell y', and cut along out o' this!"

So Joe cut along, reeling a little as he went. For he had the information he needed. He knew where Simon Darlington was heading. *He knew.*

Three years earlier, when he and Simon had first drifted together as casual shipmates, they had taken a run one season aboard a steam whaler out of North Auckland to the Antarctic. It had been an adventure to them both as youngsters: "a rough place and a rough business," indeed. What more likely than that Simon should cast back again? What more certain than that

"Laddie," she said, "dinna try to lie to a wumman wi' eyes in y'r head like yours."

he had? The girl could not have betrayed it more explicitly; he must have passed through Auckland within a range of days—he must have come seeking the same place and the same business as his very surest refuge. His trail had tended steadily away from customary and crowded haunts; it lay now toward the farthest rim. And in his own tight-lipped fashion Joe was content. Down yonder at the bleak end of nowhere would be the fitting spot for such an account as theirs.

Actually, this proved the turning-point of Joe's pursuit; though Joe himself was hardly aware with what inevitable steps he moved on from it. How he found, in fact, that two old whaling craft (relics of a fleet once numerous and flourishing) had recently cleared from Whangamumu; how he learned that neither was due home for many weeks; how he waited and wandered and starved until he got wind of that lucky, or unlucky, berth on the *Cassie S.* which carried him down to the islands of the South—these events and subsequent might have seemed fortuitous or fateful. But not so. It stands to be remembered as between Joe Grimshaw and Simon Darlington, time was nothing, chance was nothing. Somewhere and somehow, here or hereafter, the two must have met. If it had not been then, still it would have been. If they met as they did, still it was the issue of a will inexorable as fate itself.

Brief: on the morning of May 3rd, in longitude just about 180° and latitude just about 49° South (which is to say almost literally the bottom of the earth reckoning from Greenwich), Joe Grimshaw landed on one of the Antipodes group of uninhabited islets, prepared—though neither more nor less prepared than he had been all along—to settle the account aforesaid.

On April 4th the *Cassie S.* had left New Zealand and thrust her shovel nose into the long Antarctic roll. On the 15th she had made up with Macquarie Island, where she narrowly escaped foundering in the violent storm of that date. A sea-going tug, she called herself; the same being a swindle on the Government that had hired her. She was an ancient harbour craft, hastily put in commission to substitute for the regular relief vessel. Her duty was to explore for

possible castaways and to replenish *caches* throughout those barren and treacherous rock clusters which girdle the polar ocean. Short-handed, badly-found, in charge of a drunken skipper and a roaring gale, she had fallen back successively past the Aucklands, past sphinx-like Campbell Island, and finally, with moderating weather, she had ventured—a good deal too recklessly, it would seem—in among the surf-bound dangers of the Antipodes.

As the only man on board who claimed previous service hereabouts, Joe Grimshaw quite naturally had been allowed to volunteer for shore.

"You can 'ave the skiff dinghy," the cap'n growled from the bridge. "See if you can find out wot's come to that damn' depot—it looks all blown to windy-straws from 'ere. I'll take and smell around these other blasted humpbacks and pick you up t'other side."

NOW Joe was no navigator. But he was a good enough seaman, besides being a sober one. He already had taken occasion to warn Jasper of uncharted reefs strewn thick as sharks' teeth north and south, between the islets. Jasper's notion, like everything about his command, appeared slovenly and risky. Joe hesitated a moment at the rail—long enough to point out that Island No. 3 contained the depot and the only vestige of a roadstead, that he probably could report back in half an hour, and that Jasper might better heave to and wait where he was.

"'Oo's running this ship?" was Jasper's surly answer. "A nice thing if a blasted tinker can teach me. Nar, then—nar, then—look alive, Grimshaw, or you'll 'ave my dinghy smashed and sunk overside!"

Joe said nothing more. He dropped into the dinghy—he did not foresee how well he should come to know her—and took to his oars as the *Cassie* forged slowly ahead, plunging and squattering in the broad, grey swell. The jingle of her bells, the fumes and scents of her; the cap'n's apoplectic face glaring stolidly down at him—a grimy, bare arm waving from the engine-room hatch in derisive salute—the whole tiny, homely, intimate entity that every ship makes for every sailor: Joe was conscious of it all, and conscious with an odd pang of parting as it drew away. So must anyone have been in this forgotten corner. He had a sharp sense of isolation. So must anyone have had in this chill wind and this chill sea, running without a break from the frozen wastes of the pole. Presently, however, he had shaken off the passing uneasiness and applied himself to his task—doggedly, efficiently, as always.

Island No. 3, to which his errand directed him, rose above the waves like the top of a giant's bald head emerging. Here and there were scabby patches of moss and lichen or a fringe of torn kelp. For the rest it was naked: its basalt knobs worn glassy-smooth by storm or frosted white with guano through countless centuries. About its base the surf made a continual hollow plowter, a dirge to the harsh cries of molly-mawks—the lesser albatross of Southern waters—weaving the air overhead. When he poked into a land-locked channel he disturbed a fur seal that slid without effort from a greasy rock-slope. When he anchored the little kedge to keep the dinghy's stern off-shore and climbed forward, a corporal's guard of the king penguin was there to receive him, sitting solemnly and absurdly erect until he stepped among them and sent them pattering and buzzing like so many clockwork toys.

He could have fancied that his was the first human foot to invade their solitude. Only a fancy, of course; from seaward he had already sighted the rudely-built *cache* on the farther side which served to recall the presence and the perils, one time or another, of wayfaring men. But it is worthy of note that he did have such an impression. As he made fast his painter, as he slung a coil of rope about his shoulder and began swarming up a slanted hollow that offered like a ramp around the curving cliff, it was with no special presentiment—no tenser expectation than at any time these three months.

A disappointing sort of subject, our friend Joe Grimshaw—equally disappointing for dramatist and philosopher, you might say, right up to the supreme moment of his experience.

His plan had been to scale the height at once, then, securing his rope, to descend the steeper side, inspect the *cache*, and return. But he found the going even harder than he imagined—a surface like plumbago, on which his grip kept slipping and skidding. Soon he must remove his shoes and wriggle slowly upward with fingers and toes. Soon, too, he had something else to delay him; and that was his growing wonder at the erratic manœuvres of the *Cassie S.*

The next island northward in the group was No. 4. It lay perhaps half a mile away across a stretch of yeasty, slate-coloured water all slashed with tide-rips. There it bulked clear against the horizon, in shape somewhat resembling the humpback of a whale, as Jasper had quaintly observed. On and beyond for several miles more extended the whole chain of smaller rocks and reefs against which Joe had presumed to give his warning. And yet, if it was

possible to believe, by every appearance the cap'n meant to drive straight through. The tug had proceeded under full steam; she had circled well to leeward; now she veered and headed around at a point just beyond No. 4.

It was a mad thing to witness—one of those things due to bravado or sheer idiocy which remain for ever incalculable, which no one can adequately explain. The *Cassie* seemed to gather speed. As if a renascent energy had thrilled her old timbers, as if a perverse resolve had seized her, with a ragged ribbon of smoke flaunting from her funnel in the wintry sunshine, with the sprays bursting over her prow she went hurrying almost gaily, almost merrily, straight toward that hidden graveyard. Joe saw her close the gap—inch by inch, so to speak. He thrust forward on the steep cliff edge. He braced himself at the very verge the better to stare, incredulous.

And that was the instant his eye was taken by a ray of reflected metallic glitter, quite close, just below him; and he looked down a matter of ten feet or so upon the figure of Simon Darlington.

No error. Simon Darlington himself. There he lay against another shallow shelf of the cliff like an outsprawled seal: that "bold, strong, hot-blooded" man.

As a fugitive and a castaway, business seemed to have agreed with Simon. Always a hearty specimen, he had become positively sleek and fatted. He wore new sea-boots and a new flannel shirt—the buckle on his braces was the glittering object that had caught Joe's glance. Plainly he had found ample supplies in the depot: plainly he had lived well. He had even managed somehow to keep his beard trimmed—quite neatly and handsomely. Joe recognized that trait in him: it told more than hours of explanation. It summed up Simon's evident story—his escape from shipwreck, his peaceful leisure ever since. And in the way of such trifles it summed up Simon too—the man himself, net—his damnable physical conceit, the hateful assurance which had carried him swaggering through an evil life.

All this came to Joe as a single flash of perception. He saw at once that Simon had been waiting for the relief vessel in perfect certainty, in perfect comfort. He also saw that Simon had been taken by surprise at her actual arrival not many minutes before. The big fellow must have been interrupted at his breakfast: he still held a nibbled biscuit. But he had crawled out to the break of the cliff, just as Joe had done, in order to follow the *Cassie's* evolutions—his gaze was riveted after her now with a puzzled and anxious scowl.

Joe considered him, immobile, for perhaps a minute while he gauged the whole situation, while the white flame of his purpose steadied and focused as through a burning-glass. Then, carefully, he humped over an inch or two and passed a hand to his waist. When he resumed position he held his big Leuger automatic, a compact fistful of blued steel. The deliberate, well-oiled click as the cartridge slid from the magazine was his only announcement. It brought Simon blinking around and upward, startled—to find that gleaming, deadly ring covering him point-blank with Joe's set face behind it.

SIMON DARLINGTON must have been an excellent insurance risk. He neither blanched nor trembled. After their first widening of recognition and momentary amazement, his eyelids crinkled into something like a grin and he nodded a bit. He nodded: confirming an apparition which, it is likely, had long been familiar to his dreams.

"Well, I be blowed!" he said, presently. "Hullo, Joe! That you at last? I knew you'd come!"

There may have been a certain swagger, but there was no mockery. You see, whatever mistakes others might make about human values and human motives in this affair, Simon made none. That was why he wasted no time in argument. A remarkable fact, too, for such a born plausible rogue—such a confident, masterful egoist—well-equipped for talking men to folly and women to hell. But, you see, Simon had an entirely accurate estimate of this quiet, efficient, hard-working pursuer of his—the sort of estimate one retains of a natural quality like the sharpness of flint or the toughness of oak. That was why he chose to try the play he did, then and there.

"Couldn't fool you, ol' buck, could I?" he went on amiably, meanwhile gathering himself stealthily on his palms. "You're the dinkum little sleuth, ain't you? You damn' little hard-mouthed devil! But y' don't think you got me yet—do you, Joe? Eh? Not yet. *Eh?*"

Suddenly he flung in against the cliff, rolling over, and for a wink was safe out of range. At the same time he tugged desperately at his own hip. But the weapon jammed and the movement proved his bane—the ledge was too shallow and too slippery. Joe had no call to fire. Simon's leaping body overbalanced, his feet swung him down, and while his outstretched fingers clawed tracks in the slab guano, with a strangled oath he shot the sheer rock-slide into the sea. He had made his play and lost. When he came up again against

that glassy wall he was as helpless as a drowning mouse in a porcelain bath.

So this was the end of Joe Grimshaw's mission—a vengeance he could hardly have improved. This was the goal to which he had travelled unerringly, "far, far from folks and housen." Round about the cliff a flight of molly-mawks screamed and hovered like grey-feathered ghosts. Shadows of thin clouds drifted by with the raw wind. The hollow roaring surf that ringed them spoke of desolation and emptiness. And here the score between these two men was finally cast up for settlement—a fitting place and a fitting settlement.

Simon had reached a precarious hold from which the waves continually slapped and battered him. Weighted with his heavy outfit, benumbed in icy waters, it cost him an exhausting struggle to hang on. He looked up the cliff at Joe; and Joe looked down the cliff at Simon.

It is easy to figure in some degree what currents rode in their gaze at that moment, to meet in the spark of inextinguishable hatred. What memories of common friends and pleasantries, of meetings and partings, promises and hand-grips—and, finally, of a vile treachery and a bitter wrong. What visions, most of all, of a woman's delicate beauty—her tender, pleading, pitiful face. They must have remembered then, and each must have known the other was remembering, for the one snarled up, defiant, and the other stared down, implacable.

SIMON did not beg for mercy: how could there be any mercy for him? And Joe had no impulse to mercy: how could he have any mercy to give? Simon had only to die. And Joe had only to watch.

They stayed that way through an unmeasured space of time—unmeasured, for time has no count in such crises. It might have been seconds or minutes later when the thing happened.

A sound came to them over the water—a vague sound, difficult to define—no more than a stir on the air. Something like a shock, perhaps, or a distant, muffled explosion, or even the cry of many voices raised as one. At any rate, it was enough to penetrate their obsession. Since their encounter neither had turned a thought toward the *Cassie S.* They thought of her now. But when they looked—she was gone.

Across there, Island No. 4 bulked in the sunshine: a grim blot against the horizon. From somewhere behind trailed a veil of the *Cassie's* smoke. It thinned out: it shredded to leeward—it vanished, cut off. It did not renew again. Presently all was quite blank: the rock and the sea and the sky. Nothing more.

Simon had twisted around as best he could, straining above the smother. Joe propped upon his perch. They waited. They waited to see the vessel emerge at the windward side or to hear some further indication of her presence. Nothing. Whatever the island had hidden, the island continued to hide. The molly-mawks screamed: the surf droned its dirge: wind and clouds drove by out of the empty polar ocean. Nothing more.

This was the primitive. This was the rim of the earth.

They were alone. They were as far removed from "social security and the modern code" as they well could be. Over there behind No. 4 centred their only possible connection with the ordinary world: their single link with "civilized citizens and happy homes." The *Cassie* was all that had bound them. And the *Cassie* had disappeared.

They waited to the last endurable instant.

"My God, Joe!" called Simon, hoarsely. "That fool tug's gone and got herself sunk over yonder!"

It was a statement: not an appeal. Joe answered it with a curt nod. Already he had unslung the rope from about his shoulders. Already he was rigging it to cast about a knob of the rock. He dropped the free coils. Simon caught them and handed himself up to the cliff. Joe helped him over the last rise. Together they went hurrying back toward the landing, emulating each other in ordered, intelligent speed like men in a drill.

At one moment Simon led the way; at the next, Joe was ahead of him. Simon was first at the painter, but Joe was first aboard the dinghy. While Joe hauled up the kedge, Simon thrust off-shore. Each seized an oar, and side by side they fell into the short, choppy stroke that eats up distance so swiftly.

They were too late, of course. When they rounded No. 4, when they came surging past the last intervening point and the whole length of the group lay before them, there was no sign of the *Cassie S.* No sign, unless a worthless litter of odds and ends be named: a few sticks and boxes from the galley, a deck-coop, some wads of cotton waste floating in a spread of oil—and a dark dot which, when they caught up with it, proved to be the cap belonging to the late unfortunate Cap'n Jasper.

"He picked out an able reef while he was at it." Simon broke a long silence to pronounce the skipper's epitaph. "Must ha' ripped her keel off like one of these here patent tin-openers. They wouldn't live long in this water. *I* know that," he added, with his hint of a grin. "Unless maybe they might crawl on to a rock somewhere."

Simon's leaping body overbalanced and he shot the sheer rock-slide into the sea.

But they found no such rock. They could not even find the spot where the *Cassie* had gone down. They never did find it. Though in the course of their search occurred a curious incident.

They had landed at a jagged, low-lying strip to examine among its crevices. Joe climbed on a tilted shelf above deep water and knelt there, peering down, and Simon stood just behind him. Joe's back was turned; he was entirely absorbed and unconscious. Simon loosened the revolver which had been jammed in his hip pocket all this while. He got it out finally. He held it in his hand. He glanced at it: he glanced around at the stark immensity that surrounded them—just the two of them there. Then he glanced at Joe.

Presently he reached and grabbed the little man by the slack of his coat. "Look out," he said, solicitously. "That rock's blinkin' slippery!"

Joe stepped back.

"Say, Joe," continued Simon, calmly, "lend me your wipe, will y'? Something to dry this ruddy gun o' mine. She'll be getting all rust."

Joe complied without a word.

"She's going to come handy before you and me get through," Simon went on. "Seal-meat and such; we'll need all we can lay in. That tug won't be missed for a couple of months. There ain't more'n two weeks' grub left in the depot for the two of us. I've burned up most of the wood. And winter's coming on fast."

Joe nodded.

"You and me, we're due for a stiff pull if we're ever going to get out of this place," said Simon. "A damn' stiff pull!" Once more he scouted about the horizon. "And I want to tell you it's a hell of a lonely place. My God! *ain't* it lonely, though!"

PHILOSOPHICALLY speaking, there remains nothing more of the story of Joe Grimshaw and Simon Darlington except its odd conclusion. The conclusion, to be sure, was afterwards discussed by one of the most distinguished members of the Perth and Westralian Philosophical Society, which makes it valuable. Such events as led up to it were never known to him, or to anyone else except the two actors themselves; were only bed-rock drama, anyway, and therefore of no real philosophic account.

How Joe and Simon fought the cold and the storms of the Southern sea together; how they tinkered their twenty-foot skiff dinghy and decked her over with strips of canvas torn from the depot. How they killed their seal and penguin meat and smoked it with kelp and drift-wood, and laid up their water in empty *cache* tins when the chill rains came. How they patched a bit of a sail from their garments and laid a course by the stars and set out to save themselves—if any salvation might be.

These things were never reported. No more than their weeks of starvation and of hourly peril. No more than their weary drifting and wandering, when they were driven back by tempest from their feeble attempts to reach first New Zealand and later Tasmania. No more than their common hopelessness and despair, stoically endured and heroically conquered.

Neither was it ever disclosed how at long last, by freak of winds and currents, after an amazing voyage in their frail slip of a craft of nearly four thousand miles, they sighted the Australian mainland. How they made their landfall not far from Cape Leeuwin itself, and, working on, sighted the white dioptric off Fremantle one early July evening. They came ashore at the mouth of the Swan River, rode up to Perth and reached the tram-line soon after midnight; a couple of haggard scarecrows under cover of the friendly darkness. They parted in Forsyth Street.

"Good night," said Simon.

And Joe returned it with a nod.

Nothing of this was ever known.

But the following is public information, as stated in the Press.

About noon of the next day, it appears, Joe Grimshaw was seen to open the door of his cottage. By the testimony of credible witnesses, he was freshly shaven and shorn, wearing his very best holiday clothes—"'e always 'ad been a neat dresser at 'ome, Mister Grimshaw." At about the same moment, in much the same mannerly and conventional rig, Simon Darlington left his old lodgings and walked out to take the air.

It was a moderately busy hour for Forsyth Street; the neighbours were abroad for their midday shopping. Through the placid stir of an ordinary suburban thoroughfare, Joe turned up the hill and Simon turned down. When they sighted each other they were perhaps half a square apart.

Simon was a trifle quicker on the draw this time; he had his revolver out and in action first. But Joe was certainly not slow with his Leuger. They advanced toward each other in the middle of the roadway—shooting as rapidly as their fingers could work the triggers.

Jury's verdict was: "Homicide under great provocation." To which the coroner added a comment of his own.

"This is a sad case for such a day as ours. Doubtless the survivor was strongly moved on meeting the scoundrel who was directly responsible for the death of his

Joe's back was turned ; he was entirely absorbed and unconscious. Simon loosened the revolver which had been jammed in his hip pocket all this while. He got it out and held it in his hand.

wife a year ago. There is also an element of self-defence which will probably weigh for leniency. Nevertheless we must deplore the fact that in our progressive metropolis, under our enlightened conditions of civilization and moral restraint (*sic*), any individual should still feel impelled to the primitive trial by battle," etc., etc.

Making Work Easier

AN INTERESTING .. NEW SCIENCE ..

By Fenn Sherie

THERE is an ancient problem—familiar to every schoolboy and every disciple of Mr. Henry E. Dudeney—which commences with the hypothesis: "In one hour 'A' can do twice as much work as 'B.' . . ."

Equally interesting, and infinitely more important, is a modern problem—familiar to all heads of industry—in which the former hypothesis reappears as a definite fact. It is the problem of the industrial worker who fails to keep pace with his fellows, not on account of idleness, but simply because he cannot "get into the knack" of doing a particular task to which he is set.

Experts have recently been studying this question from a psychological point of view. They have been mixing with the workers in offices and factories, observing their methods, studying their tastes and temperaments, and now, as a result of their investigations, they have established the diagnosis and remedying of faults in the "human mechanism" of industry on a scientific basis.

An official organization has been formed, under the presidency of the Earl of Balfour, not as a money-making concern, but purely as a scientific body, with the object of helping employers and *employés* alike to apply this new knowledge in a practical manner.

Although it has a somewhat "highbrow" name—"The National Institute of Industrial Psychology"—the methods it employs are simple, direct, and effective. Indeed, judging from what I saw and heard on a recent visit to the headquarters, it is nothing more than a National Institute for the sympathetic study of human nature and the scientific application of common sense with the laudable object of making work easier.

AVOIDING "SQUARE PEGS IN ROUND HOLES."

One of the most important branches of its work is known as "vocational guidance"—testing young people in order to find out for what job they are best suited, the object being to obviate the troubles which so often arise from trying to fit "square pegs in round holes."

Now, history has shown that many a dunce at school has attained greatness in the world. Sir Eric Geddes, it is said, was usually at the bottom of his class when a boy—and, in the past, the list of illustrious dunces includes such names as Napoleon, Wellington, and Cecil Rhodes. It is obvious, therefore, that the school report is of comparatively little value in determining a youngster's potentialities. Realizing this fact, the psychologist approaches his subject from a new angle. He formulates his ingenious tests and examinations not with the object of learning what a youngster has done in the past, but of ascertaining what he is capable of doing in the future. Some young people develop a distinct leaning towards a certain trade or profession at an early age, whilst others, though revealing no definite bent, may have their talents hidden beneath the surface. Generally speaking, it is fairly easy for the psychologist to ascertain whether an examinee possesses what is known as a "literary mind" or a "mechanical mind" (these are the two main categories into which most people may be divided), but when it comes to testing specific abilities the task is a little more difficult.

Here is a young man about to start on a career. He has shown no particular aptitude at school, but thinks he would like to be an engineer. Now it may be that he has a natural talent for things mechanical; it may be that his imagination has been fired by something he has seen or read about the romance of engineering (or even engine-driving—for some boys are very vague in their desires!); or it may be that he thinks he ought to be an engineer simply because his father was one. The psychologist has

to find out whether the boy is a potentially successful engineer, and, if so, to what branch of engineering he should be put. Having studied the youngster's school report and interviewed him in a friendly, unobtrusive manner concerning his hobbies and so forth, the examiner now endeavours to ascertain his standard of general intelligence.

A TEST FOR "MECHANICAL INTELLIGENCE."
The applicant is required to stow the ebonite strips into the tray as neatly and quickly as possible.

SOME INGENIOUS INTELLIGENCE TESTS.

He sets him a number of questions, each of which has a definite purpose. Some of them are such amusing "posers" that readers may like to try them on their friends.

For example, to test the youngster's clearness of thought, a typical question is :—

> *Draw a triangle unless there are more days in the week than there are months in the year, in which case draw a circle.*

The average boy of fourteen should be able to do this with ease.

As a test of common sense, the youth is asked to examine a number of statements and see if he can find anything wrong with them. Here are two examples :—

> (i.) *"The horse obeys his master because his eyes magnify, so that his master seems to the horse to be much larger than himself."*
>
> (ii.) *"John James, who had married his widow's sister, used to say that if a man had a bad sister it was his misfortune, but if he had a bad wife it was his fault."*

The fallacies in the above sentences are explained at the end of this article.

The next questions are formulated with the object of measuring "imaginative power." Here is one :—

> *"If people had no teeth, how would their life be different from what it is now?"*

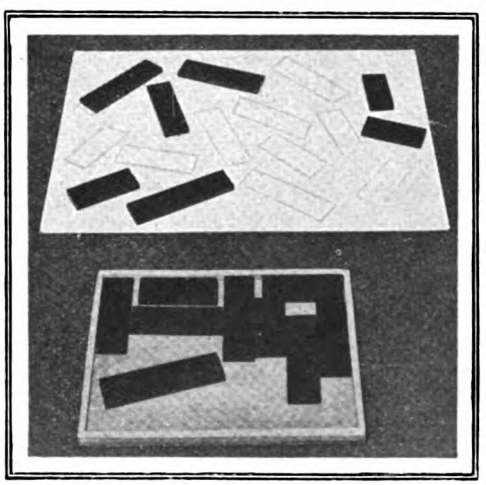
One bright youngster's reply to this was: "All of us would have to use scissors to cut our nails!"

An ingenuous test for "ability to reason" is as follows :—

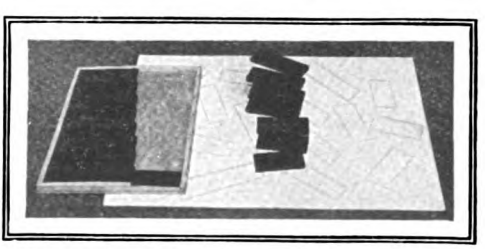
> *My brother writes: "I have walked from Byford Wood to-day, where yesterday I had the misfortune to break a limb." Can you guess from this which limb he probably broke—right arm, left arm, right leg, or left leg?*

The intelligent answer to this is, of course, "probably the left arm—since he walked and wrote a letter so soon after the accident."

According to his answers to a large number of such questions a youngster's ability to think,



(*a*) An unsystematic worker usually commences the task in the manner depicted above.



(*b*) A worker of high "mechanical intelligence" moves the apparatus to within easy reach, and stows the strips in order of size.

reason, and act can be gauged with remarkable accuracy.

In order to make the intelligence tests fair to those who have not the gift of expressing themselves in words, there are also a number of non-verbal tests, similar to those illustrated on page 592.

MEASURING "MECHANICAL ABILITY."

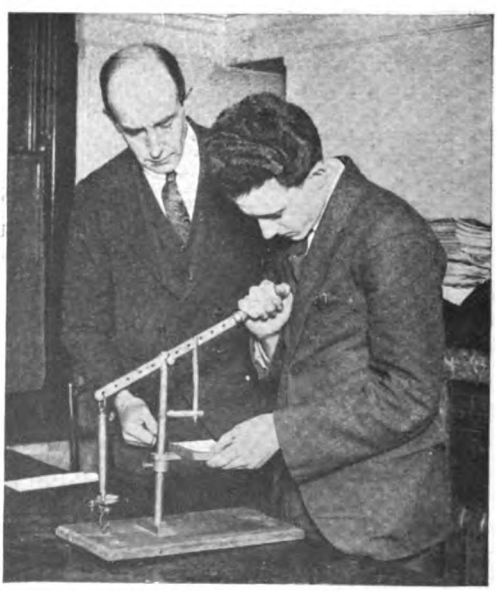
Next the examiner passes on to tests by which physical and mental capacities are measured together. For example, the psychologist produces a tray and a number of oblong strips, as illustrated on the preceding page. He spreads the strips upon the table and informs the youth that, at a given signal, he has to pack the strips into the tray. If the boy is casual, careless, hasty, or unsystematic, he will probably commence to pack the strips as shown in Fig. (*a*). The examiner then waits to see how long it takes him to realize the futility of this method—or, rather, lack of method—and remedy his mistake.

The boy of normal "mechanical intelligence" will probably set about the task with some sort of system, trying first to fit each strip, in turn, into a given space until he finds the right one. The boy of high mechanical intelligence, however, will commence by laying the strips upon the table in a row. He may then discover that they are graded in different lengths—see Fig. (*b*)—and this will enable him to fit them into their positions with great rapidity.

TESTING A WOULD-BE ENGINEER.

The component parts of ten familiar objects—such as a bicycle bell, a door-lock, or a mouse-trap—are placed in the various sections of the box. The examinee is then required to ascertain the function of each part and assemble them. The time taken for the entire set is recorded.

Here is another interesting and useful test. The boy is handed a tray containing a number of simple mechanical objects—such as a bicycle bell, a door lock, and so on, in pieces, and he is requested to assemble them. By watching his methods of going to work and timing the various operations, a great deal of valuable information may be obtained.



A TEST OF ACCURACY FOR A LATHE WORKER.

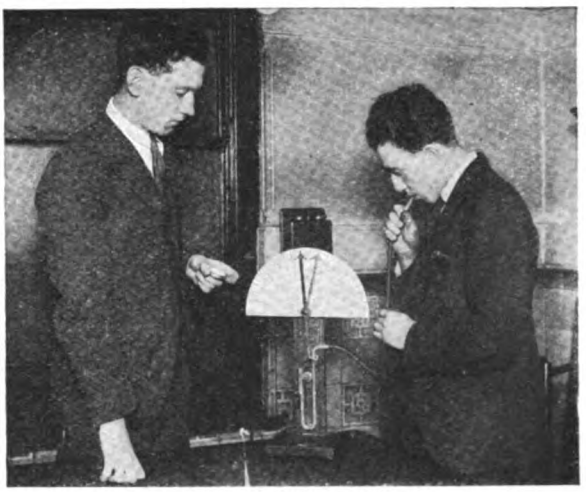
Endeavouring to hit given marks on a sheet of paper.

It will be seen from these few examples, which are taken at random, that the psychologist may learn in an hour or so more about the boy's abilities than his schoolmaster—or, in many cases, even his parents—has discovered in the course of years.

Similar tests have been devised to assist employers in the examination of applicants for specific jobs. Hitherto the selection of an apprentice or probationer has been decided by a brief interview, and his natural aptitudes gauged by guesswork. The psychologist supplements this interview with

practical tests which have been tried and proved by experience, and thereby saves the employer from expending a considerable amount of time, money, and patience in training apprentices who may afterwards prove to be failures.

A famous firm of dressmakers in the West-end of London recently had occasion to select a number of "learners" for employment in their dressmaking work-rooms, and Miss Spielman, one of the Institute's lady investigators, was asked to test them.



A PHYSICAL TEST.
An apparatus for measuring control of effort.

TESTING THE TESTER.

"But before you see them," they said to her, "we would like you to give us practical proof of the accuracy of your methods. If we send you a number of our present workers of known ability, are you prepared to examine them and compare your report with that of the fitter who has charge of them?"

Miss Spielman agreed, and, as a result of her examination, she was able not only to sort the girls into efficient and inefficient workers in agreement with the fitter's opinion, but to arrange them in order of efficiency with an eighty-per-cent degree of accuracy.

"We never apply our tests to applicants until we have proved them upon several groups of workers of known ability," Miss Spielman explained to me.

"How do you devise the tests in the first place?" I asked.

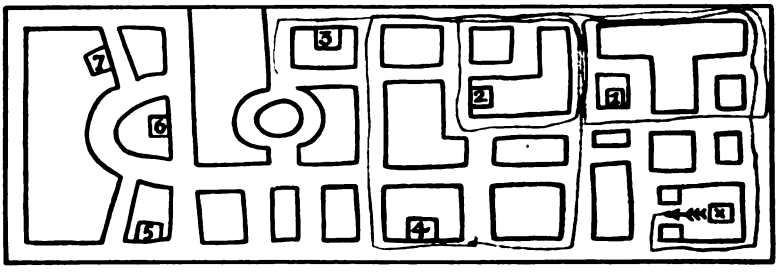
"We commence by studying the particular industry to which they are intended to apply, noting the special abilities and temperamental qualities required, and observing the methods of the most efficient workers. For instance, in the case of embroideresses we have decided that the temperamental qualities to be noted are: general behaviour, diligence, sociability, intelligence, quickness of decision, and 'teachability.'"

"But could not any person who is a good judge of character determine these qualities at an interview?" I asked.

"To some extent, yes. But it is not every employer who is a good judge of character,

A TEST INVOLVING DIVIDED ATTENTION.
An apprentice engineer undergoing a test in which movements are interrupted. With two fingers of the left hand he carries out a tapping motion as rapidly as possible. The frequency of the taps is registered automatically. With his right hand he endeavours to convey as quickly as possible a number of pegs from one place to another. Meanwhile, at intervals, the examiner presses a secret switch which turns on the electric light. Every time this occurs the examinee is expected to break off the other movement and extinguish the light by means of the switch at his right hand.

and, in any case, a person who is not a trained psychologist may easily gather a totally wrong impression at an interview. Not only is it important that tests should be standardized, so that every applicant has an equal chance, but such personal factors as nervousness, undue modesty, and undue boastfulness have to be taken into consideration. Moreover, the 'general impression' gained by an untrained examiner can hardly be as valuable as the finding of a psychologist who has previously decided what qualities to look for and knows how to measure them. A short while ago I had occasion to test a girl who was deaf and dumb, and I found her to be ideally suited for a particular type of work. She is now a happy and valuable *employée* in a big firm. I do not think it is overstating the case to say that, had it not been for the application of psychology, she might have had a very great difficulty in finding employment at all.



ARE YOU ABLE TO PLAN AHEAD?

Here is a street map, with houses indicated by numbers. Imagine that you have to drive the car "X" from the garage in the right-hand lower corner to each of the houses in numerical order. It is imperative, however, that you must always turn to the LEFT (never to the right), and must pass each house on your left.

TESTS FOR EMBROIDERY WORKERS.

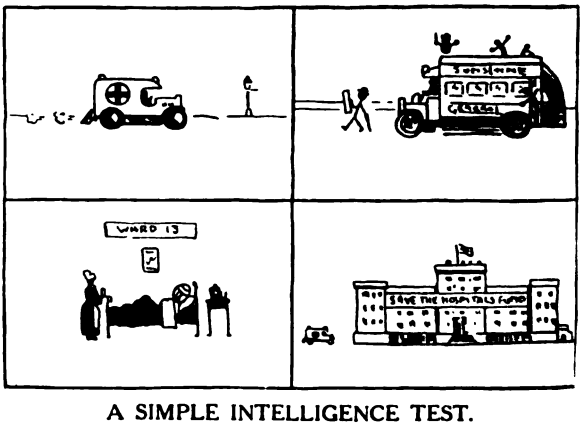
"But before we make the tests of temperament I mentioned just now, we carry out a number of specific tests of ability.

"The first for embroideresses is to ascertain ability to plan ahead, for it is important that workers should be able to work out the direction of a design in their mind's eye before actually forming it on the material. This is effected by a test somewhat similar to that shown at the top of this page.

"Then there are tests for judgment of equal distances (the need for which in embroidery is self-evident), carried out by means of cards upon which are printed a number of lines, some parallel and others diverging; tests for artistic taste—which consist of showing the applicants a number of coloured drawings of flowers and asking them to sort them, according to their personal tastes, into 'good,' 'bad,' and 'indifferent.' And so on.

"To test the co-ordination of hand and eye and hand and image (or, in other words, to find whether a girl can 'aim straight' with regularity), the candidate is given a sheet of squared paper and a pencil. A metronome is set in motion, beating one stroke to the second, and the girl is told to make a dot at the corner of every other square, keeping time with the 'ticker' She is allowed a 'practice run' to make sure that she thoroughly understands what is required of her before the proper test is made. Next she is given a pin and the test is repeated—only this time she has to prick upwards from beneath the paper.

"To measure speed of movement and determine a girl's resistance to distraction (the latter is an important quality, for work-girls will chatter to one another, and will probably be unhappy—and therefore unsatisfactory—workers unless allowed a little latitude in this direction), a perforated zinc sheet is used. The girl is given a



A SIMPLE INTELLIGENCE TEST.

Indicate the logical sequence of the above set of pictures. You should be able to do this in six seconds.

needle to which is attached a string and told to 'sew' through the holes, up and down, with one hand above and the other below the frame. After a little preliminary practice the girl is told to carry out the operation as fast as she can and the time occupied in completing a line is noted. The test is now repeated in exactly the same manner, except that the examiner, after giving the word 'go,' commences to converse with the girl, asking her questions about her school, her hobbies, and so on. According to the increase in the time taken her resistance to distraction can be accurately measured.

"Finally there is a test for speed of larger movements, which applies more particularly to wool embroideresses. The apparatus consists of a frame fitted with a number of pegs, upon one row of which are thimbles, as illustrated in the photograph. The candidate is told to transfer the thimbles from the near pegs to the farther ones as quickly as possible, using one hand only.

MOVING THIMBLES RAPIDLY FROM ONE PEG TO ANOTHER.

A test for speed of larger movements as required in wool embroidery.

"All these tests have been carefully graded, so that the examiner does not report upon the results in the usual vague terms, 'good,' 'very good,' 'poor,' and so on, but allots marks according to an accurate and fair method of classification."

"You will forgive my asking," I interrupted, "but would it not be just as easy to test the girls by allowing them to do actual embroidery work?"

Miss Spielman smiled.

"I expected that question," she said, "and it is quite a reasonable one. But you see, apart from other minor considerations, such a test would be unfair. Any girl who has had the least practice will be able to show far better results than one who has never done any work of this kind—yet the latter may be potentially a better worker than the former. The teacher of singing does not, as a rule, test a new pupil's voice by asking her to sing a song—she tries her with one or two simple notes.

"For each different branch of industry," Miss Spielman continued, "a special set of tests has to be devised. For instance, in dressmaking, the test for speed of work consists of tying a number of knots in a piece of wool in a given time (twenty knots a minute is considered a good speed of work), whilst that for lightness of touch consists of folding fine tissue paper, making as few creases as possible in the operation. One of the most important tests for weavers is to ascertain their ability to notice discrepancies in patterns. This is carried out by means of a series of cards bearing designs similar to those shown on page 594.

A "COMMON-SENSE" QUESTION.

"Some of the 'common-sense' tests may be formulated so that they have a direct application to the particular job for which the candidate applies. Here is an example. A big laundry recently had a vacancy for a lady clerk to deal with orders which came by post and telephone. Among the questions put to her was:—

"'Ten minutes after the van has left to collect the washing in a certain district you receive a telephone message from an important new customer on the round, requesting that some linen shall be collected on that day. What should you do?'

"Comparatively few applicants thought of the correct answer to this, which is: 'Telephone to the house of one of your regular customers where you know that the roundsman is due to call and ask them to oblige you by telling him, when he arrives, to ring you up.'"

Another branch of the new science is that which purposes to study workers and working conditions with a view to remedying faults in the "human mechanism" of industry.

CURING THE CROCKERY SMASHER.

"Big employers of labour often feel that there is 'something wrong' in their offices or workshops, yet are unable to trace the cause," the secretary of the Institute explained to me.

"For example, a well-known firm of caterers recently complained to us that they were suffering very heavily from breakages of crockery at their various branches, and invited us to investigate the matter."

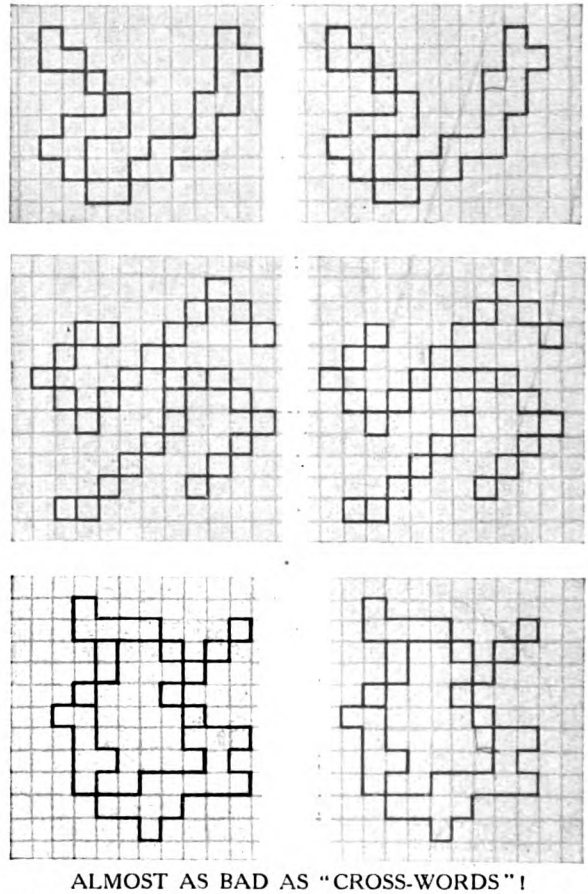
"And what was the cause of the trouble? Carelessness?" I asked.

"No. Noise and nerves," was the reply. "The investigators found the key to the whole situation when, during a 'rush period,' in which there was a babel of voices calling and repeating orders, the girls began to show signs of irritation. In the hurry and scurry some of the orders were forgotten, or mistakes were made, and consequently the shouting from one department to another increased in volume. Now and again a girl would bang her tray into the lift with a gesture of exasperation, like an angry subscriber violently replacing a telephone receiver. Another would be goaded into 'answering back.' 'All right—don't shout—I'm not deaf!' was a retort we heard quite often.

"Now there is nothing more infectious than irritability, and we found that it was almost invariably at the time when the girls' nerves were 'on edge' that they suffered from involuntary—and sometimes unconscious—dislocation of mind and muscle. In other words, they dropped things, and were not always able to understand how these accidents occurred."

"And were you able to remedy the trouble?" I asked.

"Yes. We installed a system of indicators. The worker requiring a particular article now simply presses a button, and a signal appears in the service room indicating the item required, which is immediately forwarded by a worker detailed for the job. Thus the entirely impersonal mechanism gives the 'soft answer which turneth away wrath,' and the work continues in comparative peace. Not only have the breakages been reduced (in some cases by as much as seventy-five per cent.), but the workers are happier and suffer far less fatigue. Moreover, the amount of goods handled has increased over thirty per cent. So you see the psychological study of these problems is of mutual benefit to employers and employed—indeed, to the nation as a whole."



ALMOST AS BAD AS "CROSS-WORDS"!

A test applied to weavers. In each of the above pairs of patterns there is a slight difference. Can you find it? Nine seconds are allowed for each pair.

However simple or elementary a job may be, there are always right and wrong ways of doing it, and the psychologist aims to discover the best methods. Industrial workers are like golfers. Some of them take to the game naturally; others require a lot of training; but all of them have a better chance of success if they take a few lessons from an expert. At any rate, they will find a shorter cut to the "right way" without a great deal of experiment, and they will avoid the many pitfalls which

arise from the formation of bad habits.

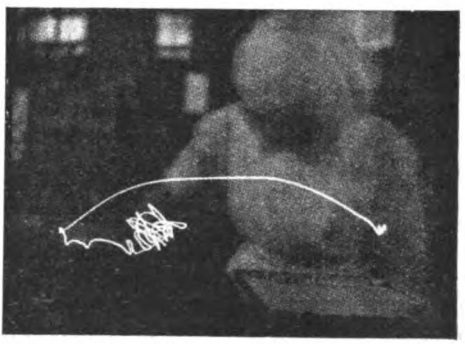
MAKING "MOTION" PICTURES.

The psychologist finds the best method of doing a specified job by studying scientifically the movements of the first-class operator. He then endeavours to teach them to those who are less deft. This is done, in many cases, by making what is known as a "chronocyclograph." A small electric light is attached to the wrist of the best worker (assuming that we are investigating a manual occupation) and his movements are photographed by means of a special camera. The resultant photograph, seen through stereoscopic lenses, shows the movement of the hands as a series of lines. These lines are copied in the form of a wire model, which in the hands of a teacher can be used for instructing the other workers.

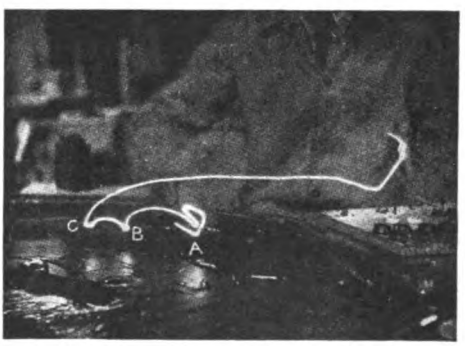
The importance of eliminating waste movement, and thereby reducing fatigue, may not be generally realized. Yet, to quote a single instance, investigations made recently in the packing department of a margarine factory revealed that whilst the best worker was able to wrap a pat of margarine in four distinct motions, another girl seemed to find it necessary to make over twenty-four motions in the same process. An interesting series of "motion study" photographs made in a chocolate factory is reproduced on this page.

"MOTION" PICTURES OF CHOCOLATE DIPPING.

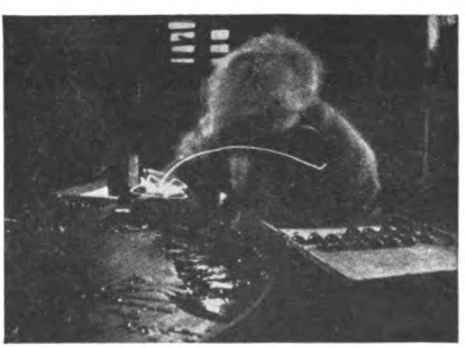
The process consists of taking up a Brazil nut on a fork, dipping it into molten chocolate, and conveying it to a tray. The photographs showing the movements involved were taken by attaching a small electric light to the end of the fork.



An experienced worker making a number of unnecessary motions in dipping chocolates.



The ideal movement in covering chocolates, as demonstrated by an investigator.



The movement of an apprentice after six months' training in the new method. In a few months her piece-rate earnings equalled those of other girls of several years' experience.

Much has been said and written about the monotony of certain tasks. But, says the psychologist, it must be remembered that monotony is not always disagreeable. Walking is a monotonous exercise, but many people derive pleasure from the rhythm it provides. Similarly, if rhythm can be introduced into working movements, monotony will be greatly reduced. This theory has been tested and proved in a number of different spheres of activity, perhaps the most remarkable of which was a coal-mine.

POPULAR SCIENCE FOR COAL-MINERS!

Now it might be imagined that the hard-headed, independent miner would resent interference from the black-coated interloper who calls himself a psychologist. But the investigators from the Institute found that, after living with the miners, wearing the same clothes, and working alongside them, they were able to arouse a keen interest in the new science and its application to the work of coal-getting. Careful observation of the methods of the best workers revealed that they used a comparatively slow stroke of the pick in getting coal, and a faster one when working upon dirt. The best workers were those who instinctively employed a steady rhythmic

movement. But these steady "plodders" were in a minority, and there seemed very little likelihood of their fellow-workers discovering their secret—or even taking the trouble to do so.

RHYTHM WITH A PICKAXE.

The psychologist, therefore, set out to train the less-expert workers to use their picks in time with a metronome. As soon as they got into the "swing" the metronome was withdrawn, and it was found that the rhythmic beat was maintained. The result was that, apart from the reduction of fatigue and the awakening of a new interest in a hitherto "monotonous" job, the output actually increased by sixteen per cent. Moreover, the miners were so interested in the new science—for an increased output meant increased earnings—that they suggested similar experiments might be applied to other movements.

The Mining Association has taken the matter up. Investigations are now being made to discover improvements in miners' lamps in order to avoid eye strain. Scientists have also ascertained the average weight of material that the average worker can lift on a shovel with regular motion and a minimum of fatigue, and are now having the shovels made in accordance with these findings—one size for dirt, another for coal, and so on.

Similar experiments and improvements have been made in other industries, with surprising results. In the work of soldering tin boxes, for example, the investigators made the interesting discovery that certain workers whose output was unsatisfactory when soldering square boxes did quite well when put to work on round ones—and *vice versa!* This curious psychological fact had never before been realized, either by the overseers or the workers, although to the latter, who were on piece rates, it meant a considerable difference in wages.

It should be pointed out, however, that unless the new science is applied under the direction of an expert psychologist and physiologist, the results will probably be unsatisfactory, and may even be harmful. It is said that a certain laundry proprietor, with the best of intentions, introduced a gramophone into his laundry to keep his workers lively and happy. As he had anticipated, the girls instantly began to work in time with the music. But he had overlooked the fact that they were engaged on a number of different occupations each of which required a different natural rhythm. What suited the "washers" did not please the "ironers," and what the "ironers" liked nearly sent the "folders" frantic. The scheme is now abandoned, and each girl is encouraged to make her own music!

All of the interesting and important research work of the Institute is being carried out with the close co-operation of the educational authorities, the head masters of various technical schools, and the managers of many well-known business concerns.

As soon as the novelty wears off, and the new science becomes more generally recognized, employers and *employés* alike will look forward to the fulfilment of Lord Haldane's recent prophecy that "within twenty years the expert in psychology and physiology will be at the elbow of every manager of every great business."

The fallacies in the sentences on page 589 are as follows:—

(i.) If the horse's eyes magnify, they magnify everything else in the same proportion, so that if he sees a man big he also sees another horse big, and sees his own body big.

(ii.) If a man has a widow he is dead.

The photographs on page 595 are reproduced from Report No. 14 of the Industrial Fatigue Research Board, by permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

YANESH WATER

By

ALBERT KINROSS

ILLUSTRATED BY F. MATANIA R.I.

I.

AMONG the three hundred and fourteen passengers who filled up the berths and state-rooms of the *Carpentaria* there was only one hard-boiled business man and scoffer; the rest were stone-eating enthusiasts. They cruised around the azure Mediterranean and anchored when they came to within marching, rail, or driving distance of the umpteen wonders of the world. That is why stewards and rude sailormen spoke of them privately as stone-eaters; for the umpteen wonders consisted mostly of old stones; ruined temples, for instance, tombs and amphitheatres, sculptured marbles, and even the Great Pyramids themselves. And among all the three hundred and fourteen there was only one passenger who was sick of it. Frankly and outspokenly sick of it; so that stewards and rude sailormen respected him and decided that he was, like themselves, a human being.

This rebel, or upstart, or whatever you might call the fellow, was a Yankee business man settled in London. Normally he sold root-beer and sarsaparilla, but just now he was recovering from a rest. The doctors had said he must have a rest, and had ordered a sea voyage. Hence his presence on the *Carpentaria*, which would give him two months on the gentlest of waters, and, at the same time, distract him by calling at the most diverse and stimulating places. He had embarked a nervous wreck, overworked, limp, and uncertain; in three weeks he had recovered, and wanted to get back to his office. And yet he had never rested before; in all probability he would never rest again; so why not see it through? And so James Winton had decided to stick it out. He was, at least, escaping the London winter and basking in the sun.

There had been lectures on Salamis and the Parthenon and the Acropolis, and now they had come to Athens. James Winton had gone ashore and had taken the uphill cars like any other stone-eater; yet once in this metropolis of ancient, classic, and thrice-hallowed grandeur, he had balked. Not for him the Parthenon, not for him the Acropolis, not for him the Stadium, nor the Museum with the gold drinking-cups from which Agamemnon and Clytemnestra's selves might once have sipped Homeric booze. Winton parted with his fellows in a spacious square, that spread its *cafés*, its restaurants, its chairs and tables, where you could sit out in the sunshine and rest in earnest.

A waiter brought him beer; he lit a cigarette and basked. This was all right, he reflected. He was seated amid a profusion of other gentlemen who seemed to be taking their first breakfast. They ordered coffee, and rolls and olives, and cheese and almonds. A queer mixture, thought James Winton. Some were military officers with swords in polished scabbards and decorations and crosses enough to furnish three ordinary heroes. It was good fun watching them, far better than visiting ruins and broken pillars, or statuary with missing feet and hands or noses.

A friendly-looking man had discovered Winton. He sat down at the same table.

"You're English?" he asked.

"I live in England, and will do for the next few years."

"American?"

"Yes," said Winton.

"Well, you're not a Greek, anyway."

"What are they like?" asked Winton; "but perhaps you're one yourself?"

"No fear!" said the other. "I'm English. I'm in business here; I sell them rice."

Winton was growing interested. Here, at last, was a fellow-creature like himself.

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"You're not mad about old stones and archæology?" he asked.

The other looked surprised.

"Thank God for that!" cried Winton, and ordered two more beers. "What do you make of them—these Greeks?" he next asked, for Winton now had visions of introducing them to such beverages as sarsaparilla and root-beer.

The Englishman smiled.

"When a Greek wakes up in the morning," he said, "he lies in bed for an hour thinking whom he's going to swindle, and when he's made up his mind he gets up."

"Difficult customers?" asked Winton.

"You listen to everything they say and form your own conclusions. Words don't mean anything here."

"Well, I'm having a holiday," said Winton. "I thought I'd like to know. Maybe there are exceptions?"

"Of course there are; or I'd be out of business," said the Englishman. "It's easy enough to sell rice or anything else here, if you don't expect to get paid for it. May see you again—I'm off to my office."

The Englishman rose, and Winton's eyes followed him.

"I'd better stick to London," he thought; but it had done him good to have a business chat once more.

THE next arrival at the little round table at which he sat was a middle-aged gentleman in patent shoes with yellow tops, a white waistcoat that enclosed a comfortable paunch, and purple necktie adorned with an orient pearl shaped like a pear. This stranger raised a brown straw hat and asked permission before he seated himself.

Winton was gracious.

"It's your *café*, not mine," he said, which made the other laugh.

"You speak English?" asked Winton.

"Yes; I was ten years in America."

"Now this is good. Where?"

"In Boston. I had a grocery business. Fine place, Boston."

"I guess you're right."

They chatted of the distant past.

"Why didn't you stay there?" asked Winton.

"I made some money, enough to live on; and then, 'If I go to Greece,' I said, 'I will be rich; if I stay here, I am poor.' So I went home. I have my wife and daughter here, my friends; I left my sons behind; they have the business."

Thence it was an easy step to root-beer and sarsaparilla, to the breakdown from overwork, and to Winton's rapid recovery.

Mr. Coronaki was, apparently, an idler like himself. When lunch-time came round he pressed the other to be his guest. "My wife and daughter will be delighted," he said.

Winton went. The Greek led him to a small villa with an enclosed garden and a glass-roofed veranda, all of which interested Winton, who liked to see how other people lived; for this was travel, real travel, and stone-eating an effete hobby. He said as much and thanked the other for his hospitality. "When you come to London," he ended, "let me know."

Mrs. Coronaki and Miss Coronaki spoke English too. They put in an appearance after Mr. Coronaki had warned them. Their olive skins had been freshly powdered, they were nicely dressed in clothes that displayed their amplitude or roundness; for Mrs. Coronaki was a stout lady and Miss Coronaki was adorably plump.

It was a change from the *Carpentaria*, with its clergymen and schoolmasters and learned spinsters and highbrow dames.

"I'll have something to tell them when I go back," said Winton. "They'll grow quite green with envy. We're staying here four days; there's such a lot to see, they tell me."

Winton didn't know quite what he was eating, nor very much what he was drinking, till his host produced a large earthenware jar that contained a mineral water which went very well with their wine.

The wine was from Mr. Coronaki's own vineyards near Volo.

"But where does this mineral water come from?" asked Winton; "it's mighty pleasant."

"From Yanesh; I have an estate there."

"You mean to say you—you grow it?"

"There are springs," said Mr. Coronaki. "It is very good water; but it comes from a long way off."

"Is there much of it?" asked Winton.

"As much as one could wish for."

"And what becomes of it?"

"Most of it runs away."

"But," cried Winton, "do you know, there's a fortune in a good mineral water—as good as this one!"

"Possibly, in Europe; but not in Greece."

Winton was seeing visions, swiftly and suddenly. He was seeing himself rich instead of prosperous, renowned instead of merely respectable.

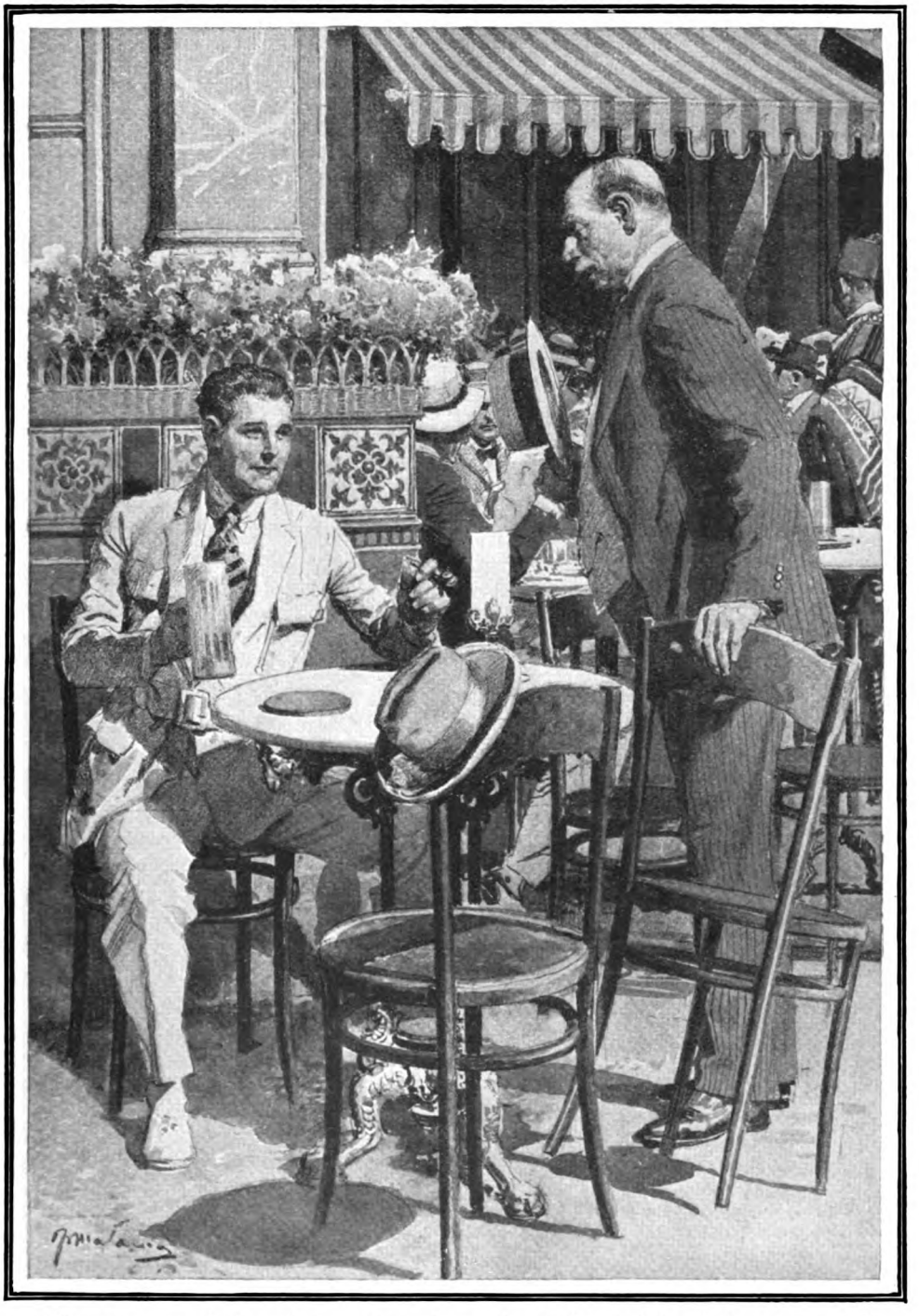
"Could I take a look at those springs?" he asked.

"It would give me great pleasure; but, remember, it is a long way off."

"We'll be here four days—is there time?"

"Oh, yes; we could go to-night and return to-morrow."

"Let's go," said Winton, who, above his



The stranger raised a brown straw hat and asked permission before he seated himself. "It's your *café*, not mine," said Winton, which made the other laugh.

desk in the London office, had fixed up a square of cardboard which urged him to "Do it now."

"It will mean a long railway journey," protested the indolent Greek.

"How long?"

"The whole night."

"That's nothing."

"And then one rides. Perhaps I ought to pay a visit to the place; I have not been there since last autumn."

"When do the trains go?"

"There's one at nine o'clock this evening."

"Let's take it."

"But there's one at nine o'clock to-morrow morning."

"I'd sooner go to night." Winton was looking the little Dago over carefully. There might be a fortune in the thing. "Perhaps I'll buy it," he said aloud. "How much would you be asking for the whole estate?"

"Tempt me," laughed the Greek.

"Say five thousand?"

"Pounds sterling?"

"Yes," said Winton. Already he saw the thing capitalized, his company formed, and a successful flotation. Five thousand was nothing, a mere fleabite; though, out here and undeveloped, it might be, as his host had said, that the springs were worthless. So much the better.

"I would wait till I had seen it," said Mr. Coronaki; "but if you like we will go to-night, though it is uncomfortable."

They separated, agreeing to meet again at the railway station, and Winton returned to the ship and filled a handbag with soap and brushes and his shaving-tackle. At half-past eight o'clock he was waiting at the station.

Mr. Coronaki arrived breathless and only just in time.

"That's where we white men have these Dagoes beat," thought Winton.

The other, however, had come provided with a basket of food and the railway tickets, and when Winton offered to pay his share, "In Greece you are my guest," he said.

It was, as Mr. Coronaki had warned him, an uncomfortable journey. They sat with four other passengers in the narrow compartment and tried to sleep. The train stopped at intervals and people got in or got out, and when these people talked they screamed and gesticulated.

"What's it all about?" asked Winton.

"In Greece it is always the same thing—politics."

"I wish they'd wait till the morning."

Day broke at last, and the loveliest dawn. It flushed the great mountains. Old Greece was left behind and they were entering now the sinister strange land of Macedonia—"Muckydoniya," Coronaki called it. At Salonica they changed into another train, which was going all the way to Constantinople; but at the second stopping-place they got out, at a station called Sarigol, and here Mr. Coronaki bestirred himself. He had sent a telegram ahead, so a man with donkeys was awaiting them, and, at the end of a four-mile ride, breakfast.

Winton was enjoying himself; this was better than stone-eating, better than travel. This was adventure.

THEY had ridden as far as an untidy farmhouse, set amid fields of maize and poppies and tobacco—so Mr. Coronaki explained with many gestures. He had a good foreman to look after the place and the poppies were grown for opium. The sun shone over a battered village, all that was left of it, ruined walls, blackened by fire and roofless.

"This is Yanesh," said Mr. Coronaki; "it was destroyed by the comitadjis in the ancient wars before Macedonia became Greek. Now all is peace here."

At the farmhouse they washed and had their coffee and bread and cheese and olives. The foreman, Janni, and his wife looked after them. "What about the springs?" asked Winton.

These stood on the edge of the ruined village. Mr. Coronaki led him down a path which ended in a small cluster of trees, the only ones in that landscape. The abundant water had made of this spot a riot of green and of dazzling flowers. Winton had brought his own flask and drinking cup, so as to test the waters at their source. They gushed out of a rocky bank through three iron spouts into a stone basin, and from this they overflowed into a natural hollow, forming a tiny lake. They sparkled in the April sunlight. He filled his cup and drank. He drank a second cup. Gee, they were good! The finest table-water he had ever tasted; and just running away; from the spouts to the basin, from the basin to the little pond! They had only to be advertised and all Europe would be calling for them. Yanesh Water! That was a good name. He saw it on hoardings, he saw it in page-advertisements, he saw it on sky-signs, he saw it on boards stuck out in fields. YANESH WATER! And he would be the big man, the chief and foremost stockholder. It was the chance of a lifetime!

"I'll give you five thousand for this," he said, "if I can have enough land for bottling works and offices and roads and storage."

"As much as you like," said Mr. Coronaki.

Winton had brought his own flask and cup, so as to test the waters at their source.

" but how are you going to get it away to Europe ? "

" There'll be a road down to the coast, a fleet of motor-trucks ; Salonica's a great port, isn't it, and freight's cheap nowadays ? I might run a ship or two." Winton was seeing it all—the factory, the bottling plant, warehouses for storage, the road down to the coast, the fleet of five-ton lorries, the gorgeous publicity, and maybe a ship or two—but that could come later.

He tried the water in the little lake, all running to waste. It was sweet and gaseous and bubbling.

" Yes, I'll take it," he said ; " five thousand isn't too much."

" It is better than—it is better than—nothing." Mr. Coronaki smiled, and it did Winton good to see him smile, making him less of a little Dago and more of a white man.

" We'll get the legal side of it fixed ; I'll want the springs and access to road and rail and room for the factory and dwellings. And what about labour ? "

Mr. Coronaki smiled again.

" As much as you like," he said. " There are thousands of refugees ; they would be glad to come."

" What refugees ? " asked Winton.

" Greeks who were driven out of Turkey during the wars. There was the war in 1912 and the Great War after that ; you will not have to worry about labour."

Winton saw it all now. He would rebuild the village, using what was left of it—he saw the long rows of hutments—and there would be the factory. " I'll get it fixed," he said. " You trust me for that, if you do your part of the business."

" As you please," said Mr. Coronaki ; " as long as you leave me the farm, my tobacco and maize and poppies."

" You needn't worry," said Winton.

He returned to the *Carpentaria* with three great jars of Yanesh Water, very mysteriously and carefully sealed, which he stowed away in his cabin. Now he was dying to get to work again, and he would leave the ship at the first port where there were good connections and he could get express trains to London.

For a moment his mind went back to the chat he had had with the Englishman who lived in Greece and sold rice on commission. According to him these Greeks were a race of rogues and swindlers. But this thing—there could be no catch in it. Mr. Coronaki hadn't sought him out with a proposition ; indeed, Mr. Coronaki had done his best to dissuade him. It was he who had pressed and hustled Mr. Coronaki.

II.

A YEAR and more than a year had passed, and Winton was watching the first convoy of motor-trucks leave the factory. He stood there proudly in the July sunshine. He had created it all ; raised the capital, floated the company, and got himself appointed its managing director on the spot ; at least, for the first year or two, until the thing was thoroughly established, till Yanesh Water had made its mark. And his own fortunes were involved, every cent he had saved, and every dollar he could find or borrow.

The long string of lorries was spread over the new road that he had built, which connected with the main road that ran through to Salonica, twenty miles distant, and the sea. By his side stood Mr. Svorono, the young, English-speaking Greek whom he had captured for his chief assistant, a silent, watchful fellow, and hard-working. It had occasionally occurred to Winton that Svorono thought him a little mad. " I think him a Dago and he thinks me dotty ; that evens out things. He's welcome," was how Winton put the situation to himself.

" As soon as they get enough stuff to run on they'll make a start with the publicity. Gee, I wish I were in London ! But you can't be in two places at the same time," said Winton, as the lorries vanished in a cloud of dust.

" No," said Svorono, " you can't. Not even an American can do that," he added gravely ; and Winton wondered whether this nimble-minded Greek was not laughing at him.

The motor-trucks came and went and the ships departed, and what they could not send by road they sent by rail. The springs gave their unfailing yield ; and the waters passed direct from the rock to the factory now, and the little lake had dried and was only a sun-baked hollow. And then one morning across that parched and sinister plain came what appeared to be an army.

Winton had had no time for politics, for any study of the newspapers ; his work had absorbed him, the rest of life had been a blank.

The men and women in the bottling works, the packing rooms, and storehouses rushed out to watch ; from the huts of the new village poured women and children.

Winton caught the excitement and followed them ; and next he returned to his office and 'phoned through to Mr. Svorono, and when that gentleman came, " What is it ? " he asked.

" The Royalists—they have been defeated—they are in retreat."

" Who are the Royalists ? " It was the first Winton had heard of them.

"King Constantine's party."

"You don't mean to say there's been any fighting?"

"Not much; but there will be."

"With whom?"

"The Republicans."

"I'm a Republican," said Winton. "I hope they win."

He busied himself next with a pile of silver and paper money which he had taken from the safe. It was a Saturday morning, and every Saturday it was his custom to sit there like a god and pay out wages. The men and women defiled before him; Mr. Svorono called their names and the amount and Winton handed it over. The workpeople bowed and Winton felt that he was making friends with them. He knew most of their names now.

A troop of cavalry had ridden into the factory yard. Winton went to the window.

"What do they want?" he asked, and 'phoned again for Mr. Svorono.

The Greek entered with an officer in a torn uniform, hot, dusty, and unshaven. This fellow laid down the law to Winton and Svorono interpreted.

"He says we must get out of the factory and village, every one of us, as quickly as possible. His men will fortify the place; they will rally and make a stand here. It will be dangerous."

"Tell him to go somewhere else," said Winton.

Mr. Svorono shrugged his shoulders.

"Tell him that there's a million dollars of good American money invested here, and that if he doesn't get out quick I'll 'phone through to the Consul."

"The wires have been cut," said Mr. Svorono.

"Tell him to get to hell out of here. Why, there's fifty thousand dollars' worth of publicity started this week."

"What does he say?" asked the Greek officer.

"Wind," said Mr. Svorono, in his native tongue, "like all these Protestants."

The Greek officer muttered something and went out again.

Winton followed him into the yard, then through the factory gates and out into the village street. The place was full of armed men, very dusty, some ragged, all fierce and ugly with defeat. They were pouring in with their pack animals, ponies, mules, and donkeys. And there were guns, real guns, with big horses to draw them. A soldier with a broad gold band around his cap was shouting orders.

"That," said Svorono, "is the general."

"The hell he is!" said Winton.

IN an hour the buildings had been loop-holed, the guns placed in position, and all the store-rooms ransacked. They had flung themselves on the co-operative grocery shop that was Winton's special pride and eaten it bare. They had strengthened the place with crates and packing, they had dug and laboured, they had seized bags of cement and bags of flour. The fleet of motor-trucks, now filled with earth instead of Yanesh Water, had become a bastion, a line of outworks stuffed with machine-guns, and above the factory floated the Royalist flag. The bottles—thousands and thousands of them—had been dumped some distance away, where, splintered by shell-fire, they could do no harm. From afar Winton heard the booming of cannon, as the rearguard, which was fighting a precarious delaying action, was being driven in on its supports. The population had fled to safety—refugees once more; but Winton stayed. "Hell!" he repeated; and again, "Hell!" as his eyes took in the change that had come over peaceful Yanesh. Half a mile away he could see Mr. Coronaki's farmhouse, its maize and poppies gathered, its tobacco dried and sent away. Little harm could come to that!

"Why didn't Coronaki tell me?" he asked of Svorono, who had followed him and who appeared to take a sly delight in this disaster.

"He thought you knew. Before one buys a thing, one asks—in my country," returned the Greek.

"I wish I had a few of you in *my* country!"

No one took any notice of them, the general least of all. Once Winton had approached him with a view to explaining that neither he nor his men had any right here; but it looked more as though Winton himself had no right here and that the soldier had neither time nor use for him and his protests.

"Who is this man?" he asked.

Svorono explained.

"Remove him," was all he answered, and he scowled on the intruder.

"Well, I can't fight a whole army, not even a Greek one," was how Winton comforted himself.

The booming of the guns drew closer. The scattered rearguard, driven in and disordered, was approaching the village or making for the wilds.

The Royalist guns now thundered from their insecure emplacements, and Winton watched the first battle he had ever seen. The Republican artillery, heavier and more numerous, was quick to answer; machine-gun and rifle fire began to patter against the walls; a spraying of shrapnel drove him under cover. When the factory chimney

came down with a crash, Mr. Svorono, who was standing at his side, leapt a full yard in the air.

"I'd better beat it," said Winton.

A second shell burst plumb on the main building, followed by a third. The walls fell in like paper, the ground rocked with explosions.

"There goes the bottling plant and all my engines! Hell, what are we waiting here for?" Winton had had enough.

Followed by Svorono he ran down to the farm and with Janni, the foreman, watched the destruction of the enterprise he had created; his dreams, his reputation, a year of vigilance and solid work. Ruined—they had ruined him! The whole thing had been a bubble—and it had burst. . . . The village, the factory, his own quarters, went down; and next came a great sheet of flame and clouds of oily smoke. "They've found the petrol dump!" he cried. It was the last straw, the finish. Ten thousand gallons of fuel had gone up in one mighty blaze. That was the end of Yanesh.

"I'm going down to the coast," said Winton.

"Better wait till after dark," said Mr. Svorono; "it will be dangerous just now. Janni must lend us some of his clothes and a couple of donkeys; we will be Macedonian peasants."

Winton had had the good sense to stuff his pockets with paper money, with all the paper money in the place, and there was a fine round sum he could lay hands on at a bank in Salonica. Once out of here and in the city, he would be safe. He looked up at the flaming village. Mr. Svorono was still beside him. "Hell!" was all he could say, "Hell!" and this time there was half a sob in it.

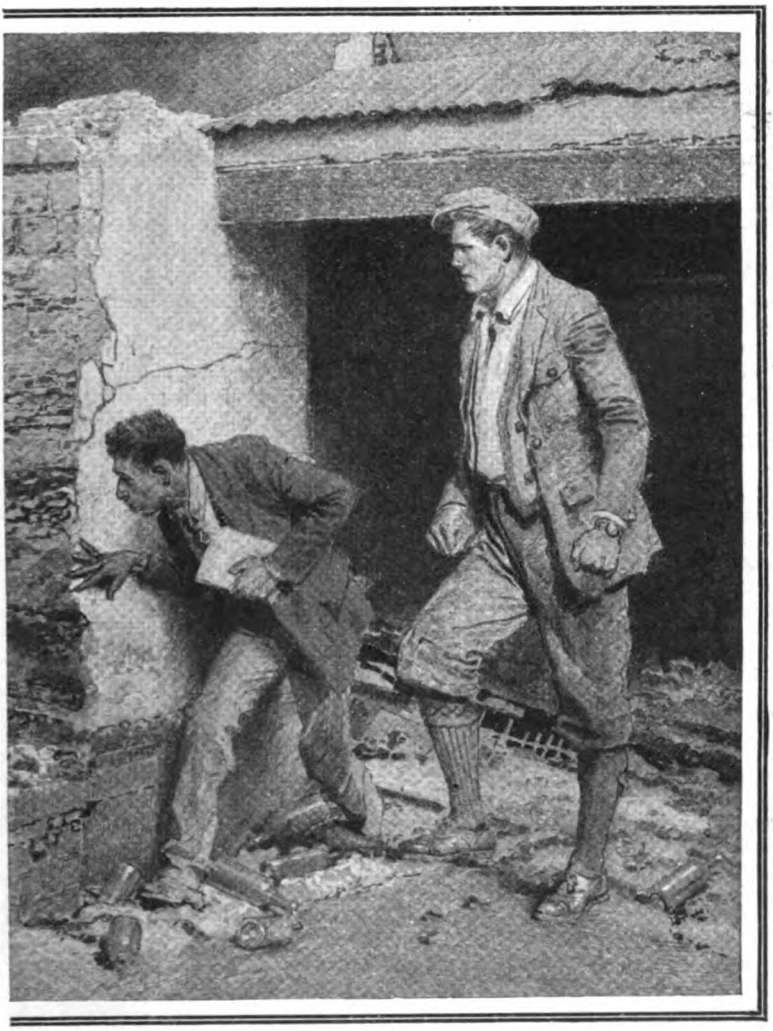
They escaped after midnight. Dressed as Macedonian peasants, on the donkeys that Janni had lent them at a price, they ambled out under the stars, Svorono leading the way. They went west instead of south, so as to avoid the two armies. "It will take longer," said Svorono, "but there is less danger." For hours they went, past lakes, past hills, through marshes, on a dim track. It led to a broad river and a Turkish village with a mosque. A railway ran northwards, and the place had a station.

Winton watched the destruction of the enterprise he had down. It was the

"This is the other line that goes to Belgrade and Vienna," said Svorono; "perhaps it is working, perhaps it is not."

It was working, and, by a lucky chance, there was a train due in an hour.

"We will be in Salonica by eleven o'clock," said Svorono.



created. The village, the factory, his own quarters, went end of Yanesh.

They found a miserable inn, where they breakfasted and left the donkeys. The train came and they bought tickets. They found an empty first-class compartment and stepped in. The train drew out. Winton was thinking hard.

"I'm not the first sucker Coronaki sold those waters to, am I?" he asked.

"There was an Austrian before," said Mr. Svorono. "He had just begun when the comitadjis ruined the place. After that he abandoned it."

"And next?"

"There was a Frenchman."

"What happened to him?"

"There was the fighting between the Greeks and Bulgars, and after that the Great War. Yanesh was twice destroyed."

"And then I came?"

Mr. Svorono nodded.

"So the fellow goes looking round, selling his waters, and every few years he finds a sucker?" Winton could see it now; and that far-away Englishman in the rice business had been wise after all. These Greeks lived by their wits, by trickery, by swindling; but it was the best thing of its kind that Winton had ever struck, the most perfect, the most finished and accomplished piece of play-acting. He saw Coronaki; the man's reluctance, the man's surprise, the man's apparent indifference, the way he had played on his eagerness, the way he had led him on. Subtle, wasn't it?

"And you knew all about this and never told me?" Winton was frowning on Svorono now. "You let me spend all that money, you knew this might happen, and probably would happen? You call yourself a white man? You were a friend of that other Dago, Coronaki!"

Winton saw it all now, the whole nefarious swindle; the Greek selling the same waters over and over again in this savage country and pocketing the price. He let them go cheap, and that made it the more tempting—

no wonder! Winton opened the door of the compartment. He seized Svorono by the neck and by the seat of his borrowed Macedonian pants and flung him clean out on to the line. "You were in it, too," he shouted; "you were in it!" After that he felt better, and, as Svorono had promised, at eleven o'clock he was in Salonica.

III.

A YEAR and more than a year had passed, and Mr. Coronaki, clutching a strange, outlandish handbag, had just arrived in London. It had succeeded before with the Austrian, and likewise with the Frenchman. He had made an offer and bought the famous springs back again. It was not much, a mere trifle, but it was better than nothing, he had pointed out, and it was not his fault that the country was so unsettled. He had not foreseen this; he was devastated with sorrow; if he had known, he would never have sold them. But they were a part of his estate, and he would like them back, if only on account of the water they yielded for the farm and for his cattle. He had it all pat; he was word-perfect; and where would one find a better actor? He had played this part, like the other, successfully before; he would play it again; and again, with ordinary luck, he would sell his springs to some unsuspecting stranger. Perhaps, the next time, the affair would not turn out so badly. No one was more sorry than he; no one. He had come to London to find this Mr. Winton and explain matters. The man was so simple, like a big good-natured child. Now it was night; but to-morrow morning.

Mr. Coronaki had descended at Victoria Station. He had the name and address of an hotel. Outside, above the crowded station-yard, a huge sky-sign was blinking at him. "YANESH WATER," it said, in letters of coloured fire, and in fire, too, appeared a picture of his springs, with the three iron spouts that emptied their precious gift into the stone basin. And next, "THE KING OF TABLE WATERS" flashed out in letters of green and red. It was ominous. What did it mean?

He walked, and on a hoarding he saw the words again, "YANESH WATER," just as Winton had dreamt them three years ago; and in smaller capitals, "BOTTLED AT OUR OWN SPRINGS IN MACEDONIA." Mr. Coronaki frowned.

He glanced through a newspaper after he had eaten his dinner at the hotel; and there was the thing again. "YANESH WATER" sprawled over the entire page, with a drawing of his springs and a factory set out in the wild landscape of their origin. "THE WATER THAT CURES," "THE WATER THAT REFRESHES," "THE WATER THAT INVIGORATES," in three parallel lines, filled up the page. Mr. Coronaki smote his Grecian brow. But Yanesh Water was done for, broken, finished! Or, after all, perhaps that treacherous American—to-morrow he would know.

Early on the next day Mr. Coronaki was astir and ready. He had the address; a taxi landed him before a splendiferous building. "YANESH WATER," in letters twelve feet high, was inscribed upon the face of it; while upon a brass plate that condescended to the street level he read the legend, "Yanesh Water, Limited and Incorporated, London, Paris, and New York." With a thumping heart he entered the building and staggered towards a desk marked "Enquiries." He asked for Mr. Winton, sent up his name, and took a seat. On one wall he was confronted by an immense enlargement of a snapshot photograph taken by Winton eighteen months ago. It showed the village and factory as they had once stood in the fierce Macedonian sunlight, the string of motor-lorries, and groups of smiling workpeople. On another wall was displayed the scene within the factory as the waters rushed into the waiting rows of bottles.

A young lady, soft-voiced and respectful, interrupted Mr. Coronaki's bitter meditations. Would he come this way? He followed her to the lift and next into the spacious office where Mr. Winton was awaiting him.

"This is the bird I told you about," said Winton, without rising, without even offering his visitor a chair; and next, addressing Mr. Coronaki: "This is Mr. Mason, our chemist. He turns out a better water—more kick in it."

Mr. Coronaki mentioned his errand, the purpose of his visit.

"Sell the place back to you? I'm going to keep it. Good Lord, no! It's made a rich man of me, besides giving me the time of my life. The time of my life!" repeated Winton, re-living once more the high lights of that thrilling and adventurous experience. He shifted his cigar. "Nobody shells us here, no sieges, no battles, no machine-guns! Eh, Mason? Just plain business."

The chemist smiled.

A week later Mr. Coronaki, back in Athens, was telling a sympathetic audience how he had been swindled.

"Betrayed and cheated!" he screamed. "By that lying American! The man looked so simple. He was as deep as twenty devils!"

WHEN I WAS YOUNG

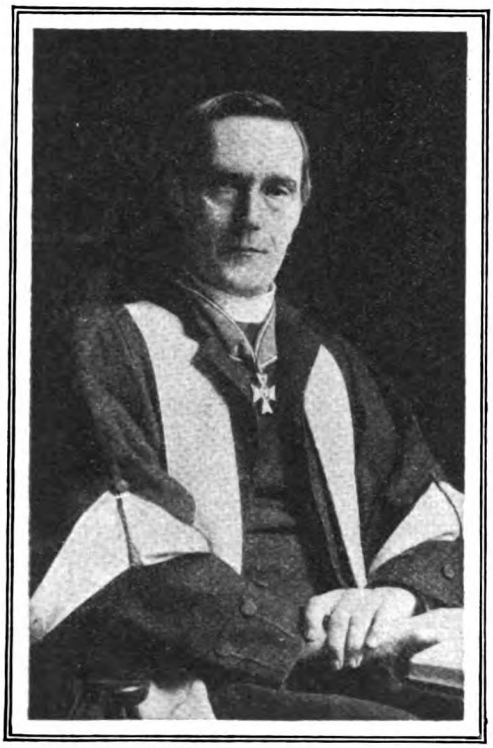


Photo. Blake's Studios.

A SERIES of ARTICLES by CELEBRITIES of TO-DAY describing HOW THEY VIEWED LIFE IN THEIR EARLY YEARS

No. 7

The Very Rev. W. R. Inge

(DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S)

TRAVELLERS between York and Northallerton may notice, as the train dashes past the little station of Alne, a wooded hill rising out of the plain a few miles off, with a castle and a church on the top. This is Crayke, where I was born on June 6th, 1860. It is a beautiful village, and the view from the Wishing Gate, which has been the recipient of many youthful confidences, is something not to be forgotten. Before us lies the great plain of York, looking as flat as the ocean, the skyline broken only by the massive pile of York Minster, twelve miles off, which rides the plain like a stately ship. On the right is the bold outline of the Hambledon Hills, with a great white horse, always kept carefully scoured. Behind us is the hilly country beyond Yearsley. An outlying spur of Crayke hill is the clump called Oliver's Mount, named, as my mother told me with indignation, after the wicked man who beheaded the Royal Martyr. Crayke was at that time very much cut off from the world. There was then no branch line to Easingwold, and my grandfather always drove into York behind a pair of fat horses, which covered the distance in about two hours. There was still, I think, a lingering feeling that railway travelling was a dangerous innovation; we were taught to say our prayers with extra care before embarking on a journey by train. Such excitements were few and far between.

My grandfather, Edward Churton, Archdeacon of Cleveland, and for forty years rector of Crayke, was an old-fashioned scholar and divine, author of "The Early English Church," then the best popular book on the subject; of "The Cleveland Psalter," a metrical version of the Psalms; of two volumes of poems, and of a learned work on the Spanish poet Gongora, which

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is still quoted with respect by students of Spanish. He lived mainly in his library, well stocked with folios of theology, including all the verbose Fathers of the Church, and all the Anglo-Catholic divines from the Laudians to Pusey. He had been a friend of the leading Tractarians, and a visit of Manning to the Rectory was remembered. It was a life very unlike that of a modern Archdeacon, but he was much respected; the Church in those days was more learned and thoughtful, and less nervously active, than it is now.

His only daughter married my father in 1859. William Inge, who belonged to the younger branch of an old Staffordshire family, was a Fellow of his College, and had been the fast bowler in the Oxford Eleven, a very handsome man with an athletic frame, and no fault except excessive diffidence. He came to Crayke as tutor to the Archdeacon's sons, three of whom won scholarships at Eton, and the fourth was "nominated" to the foundation at Charterhouse. My father was shortly afterwards ordained, and served as curate at Crayke, refusing preferment, till the Archdeacon died in 1874; after which he held a living in Staffordshire till he was appointed Provost of Worcester College, Oxford, in 1881, and soon afterwards was offered the bishopric of Salisbury. This last honour so shocked his modesty that he refused by return of post, without even telling his wife. He died at Oxford in 1903, leaving a well-deserved reputation for sound judgment (where his own merits were not concerned) and a saintly character.

WE had hardly any neighbours at Crayke. The neighbouring squires were some of them rather like Sir Pitt Crawley, and the family at Alne were our only close friends among the clergy. It was an isolated existence, such as can hardly be imagined in these days. My parents had abundant leisure, which they devoted to educating their children, and both of them had a genius for teaching. Much of our instruction was given by reading aloud, while we "did copy-drawing." Somehow, we managed to attend to both, and in this way we were introduced at a very early age to Shakespeare, Spenser, Tennyson, Sir Walter Scott, and several books of history. The excellence of my father's classical teaching may be judged from the successes of the young Churtons, and from my own position as second on the list of Eton scholars after only three months at a preparatory school. We had indeed an admirable education, such as no children get in these days. All our work was made thoroughly interesting, and in the paper-games, which were our delight, we composed short stories and poems at top speed—the best possible training for examinations. Cousins of our own age were taught with us; one of them is now a Fellow and Tutor at Oxford. I once inadvertently locked him up in the rabbit-hutch when I went in to lunch. For outdoor games we had cricket with the village boys, and I remember watching with tremendous excitement a match between an Eleven of professionals and Twenty-two of Easingwold and district, a form of cricket which was then very popular. The Twenty-two tumbled over each other in the field, about three of them colliding painfully when a catch went up; their innings was a melancholy procession of victims, some of whom were severely knocked about before the redoubtable George Freeman shattered their stumps. Only one of them got into double figures. The village club was a good one, but the score-book shows that rustic wickets did not suit Oxford Blues. It was a bitter disappointment when a promise to take me to the Canterbury Week had to be withdrawn. That was the occasion when, if I remember right, W. G. Grace got nought and two hundred and sixty-eight in one match, nought and two hundred and seventeen in the other. J. C. Shaw, or Alfred Shaw, I forget which, was responsible for both the ducks' eggs.

Sunday was a mitigated Puritan Sabbath. The only amusing book we were allowed to read was one by Neale on the Christian Martyrs, whose ingenious tortures gave us great pleasure. But we were allowed to play a few games, only not the same that we played on weekdays.

On one side our training was certainly peculiar. My mother was not only a Puseyite but a Jacobite and a Tory of a far deeper blue than *The Morning Post*. The summaries of English reigns which we learned by heart were composed, I believe, by my grandfather. William IV. "was too good-natured to the Whigs and Radicals, and gave his consent to what was called the Reform Bill, which wants reformation." Our governess struck at this, and so fixed it indelibly in my mind. A history of England informed us that "the established religion is the Episcopal Protestant, but all other religions are tolerated." I gathered that I was to express disapproval not only of the word Protestant but of the principle of toleration, which I did with a vigour that even my mother thought excessive. My father, like every serious Englishman in his generation, read through the Parliamentary debates with veneration. A member of Parliament was a magnificent being, surpassed in majesty only

by a bishop. Anyone who can remember the 'seventies will recall the amazing respect paid to these two dignities. My parents abhorred Gladstone's politics, but could not forget that he was a "good Churchman," which could hardly be said of Disraeli, though on a celebrated occasion he declared himself on the side of the angels.

The High Churchmanship of those days would hardly be recognized as such now. Ecclesiastical millinery was totally neglected; I do not think that my grandfather ever wore a cassock. On the other hand, there was no hesitation in calling dissenters heretics or schismatics, or both. The Church of England was the only religious body that had a right to exist. There was a small Wesleyan chapel in the village; but half the Methodists came to church once on Sundays, and all, I think, were married and buried by the rector. The stiffer Churchmanship of the next generation drove all such pious waverers into unmitigated Nonconformity. I well remember the church harmonium, but I was too late for the barrel-organ, which once refused to stop, and was carried out playing the Old Hundredth down the churchyard.

Age 3.

On another occasion, while my father was preaching, the church door was thrown open, and a red face appeared at the entrance. "If you please, Mr. Inge," said the voice, "can you lend us your squeeth" (garden hose); "there's a rick on fire."

The mental troubles of a nervous child were not so well understood then as they are now. I had a terrible fright when I was three or four years old, from suddenly seeing the distorted reflection of my face at the bottom of a sink. For many years afterwards I could not bear to look at myself in the glass, for fear of seeing some such horror as had once terrified me. Long after I was grown up I was conscious of a wish to shut my eyes while passing a mirror. The psychoanalysts, in spite of much unpleasant non-

The village of Crayke, Dean Inge's birthplace.

sense, have done good service in calling attention to these "phobias," the result of early frights. How common they are it is impossible to say.

I cannot say that my early life was as happy as it ought to have been. When my mind was unoccupied, I suffered severely from what in the jargon of the new psychology is called the "inferiority complex," the wrong sort of humility, which makes its victim firmly convinced that he is "a worm and no man, the very scorn of men and the outcast of people." My father saw that there was something wrong, and used to say to me, "Remember good Bishop Hacket's motto: 'Serve God and be cheerful.'" Self-contempt is in truth the very opposite of St. Paul's manly attitude: "Who made thee to differ from another? Or what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" Self-acceptance, for better and for worse, is part of the wisdom of life, which we learn sooner or later. The young often find it very difficult, and perhaps it is good for them not to acquiesce in their limitations while their characters are still malleable. But a reasonable amount of self-confidence is necessary for happiness, and almost necessary for success. In my own case, neither good advice nor an unbroken series of academic triumphs was of any use. This kind goeth not out save by—a happy marriage.

I was nearly fourteen when I went for one term to a preparatory school. When I went to say good-bye to my grandfather, the good old man took leave of me in the lines from Shakespeare:—

Age 5.

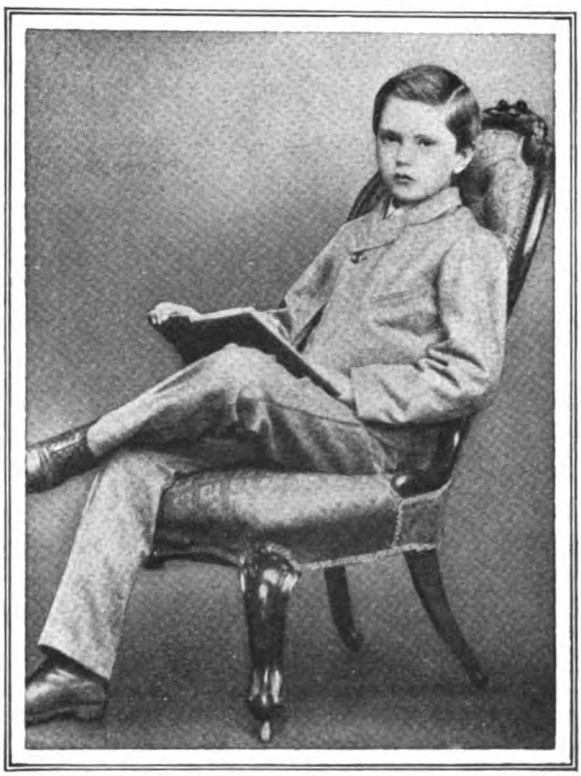
If we do meet again, why, we shall smile;
If not, why then this parting was well made.

We did not meet again. He died a few days before I went in for my Eton examination.

I was fortunate enough to be at Eton during the height of its wonderful successes in classical scholarship. Not even Shrewsbury under Kennedy had a more brilliant record at Cambridge than Eton under Hornby in the ten years of which I speak. In six years out of eight the best scholar of the year was an Etonian; in one of the other two years our best man went to Oxford. The system in the upper part of the school was peculiar to Eton. The compulsory work was very light, but the classical tutors gave extra help to the cleverer boys, and encouraged them to work by themselves. The competition was intense, especially in the months before the examination for the Newcastle Scholarship, the blue ribbon of Eton. The untired brains and unspoilt eyes of eighteen can work for ten or eleven hours a day, absorbing knowledge like a sponge. We sat up till the small hours with a shaded candle (for "lighting up" was against rules), and were none the worse for it. We did not know ourselves how hot the pace was till we went to the University; and as for our doings there, are they not written in the chronicles of the Cambridge University Calendar?

Whether the classical course, as pursued at Eton and Cambridge forty or fifty years ago, was really a very good education, I have my doubts. It was not cram. We read in masses, and we read the original authors, not modern books about them. We had to use our brains, for the apparatus of notes and cribs was not nearly so complete as it is now. Composition in Greek and Latin prose and verse was by no means waste of time. It compelled us to study the classical authors with an eye to their literary beauties, as models for us to imitate; and it compelled us to understand the English authors whom we had to translate into Latin or Greek, which is not such a simple matter as some may think.

But it did not broaden the mind. We were not encouraged to think that life has problems to solve; there was hardly any essay-writing, and hardly the rudiments of philosophy or scientific history. The subsequent careers of our most brilliant scholars have been a little disappointing. Several of them have become bishops; and these, though excellent men and capable administrators, will leave no mark upon the thought of their time.



Age 13.

There was, indeed, a group of boys of a different type. If we had been asked to choose the two among our contemporaries who were most likely to be distinguished men, we should probably have named J. K. Stephen and H. C. Goodhart. Both, unfortunately, died young, but not before justifying the high opinion of their school-fellows. Sir Cecil Spring Rice, our Ambassador at Washington, belonged to this group; but the only quite first-class reputation made by the Collegers of my time is that of Lord Parker of Waddington, one of the greatest judges of our day. Some of us naturally returned to Eton as masters, a career which does not lead to public honours, but which has satisfied some of the best and ablest men whom I have known. Such, among the men of my "election," are the present Vice-Provost of Eton and the present Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge; and such was the late H. F. W. Tatham, who headed the list in 1874, when I was second, and who lost his life in the Alps. It must always be remembered, in considering the relation of scholarly distinction to success in life, that a large proportion of scholars will choose to make learning their profession. The Muses have neither fame nor fortune in their gift; but their votaries may think that they can bestow what is better than either.

It must not be thought that Eton Collegers were indifferent to the prevailing cult of athletics. They prided themselves on both playing and working harder than the rest of the school, and there was one year when they were more than willing to play the rest of the school at football—at the "Field" game. I was very fond of cricket, but never got farther than the College Eleven.

My undergraduate life at Cambridge was too much like my life at Eton, a continuation of the same kind of work, which ought to have been changed for something less like schoolboy reading—intense application when an important examination was near, and the same games. After the first part of the Classical Tripos I specialized in ancient history, and this was the year that I enjoyed most. I have often thought that if I could begin again I should choose to be a historian. What I should have made of it, neither I nor anyone else will ever know, but the subject fascinated me then, and has done so ever since.

My holidays, till 1881, were passed mainly at Alrewas, a straggling, troublesome, and unattractive parish on the banks of the Trent, of which my father was vicar till he went to Oxford. My parents were so busy that they seldom met except at meals, where parochial shop was discussed *ad nauseam*, and the parishioners usually came to see my father at meal-times, because they were sure of finding him in. If I had ever wished to become a parish priest, the experience of these holidays dispelled any such desire.

It was not till rather later that I became

interested in theology, and, unhappily for my parents, I could not return to the Anglo-Catholicism which was so near to their hearts. My father took my heresies philosophically; but my mother could not forgive my defection, and I fear never did really forgive me. There was more than a trace of the attitude of Monica to Augustine when he dabbled in the errors of the Manichæans. These family divisions, due to differences in religion, are very distressing; it will be remembered that Christ clearly predicted that this would be one of the results of His coming. The author of "Ecce Homo" and Matthew Arnold were among the prophets of that generation. They are in part antiquated, but I am not ashamed of having been influenced by them. "Honest doubt" and all the attitude which those words suggest are laughed at by some who are dogmatists without ceasing to be sceptics. There was a moral earnestness about the theological Liberalism of the 'eighties which we cannot always observe in the breezy cocksureness of the returned Army chaplain. But I had at that time no thought of becoming a clergyman; I was twenty-eight before I applied for deacon's orders, and thirty-two before I proceeded to the priesthood.

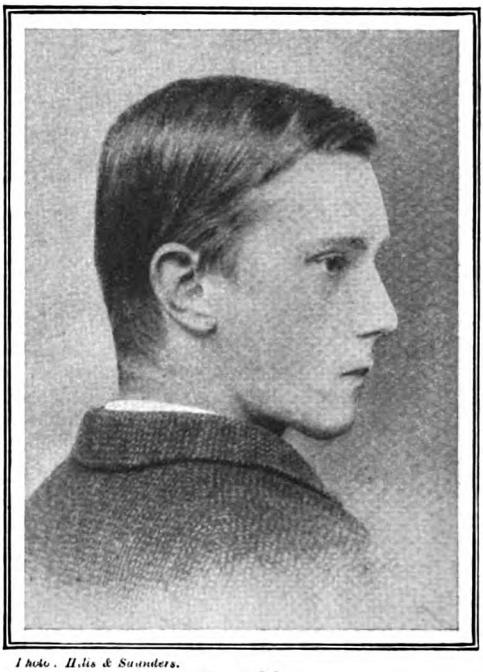


Photo. Hills & Saunders.

Age 22.

It is a strange thing to cast one's eyes back upon the past. It is a mist-covered tract, with peaks rising here and there above the clouds. The earliest recollections are among the clearest; but after-experience has deeply coloured even those things which we think we remember best; we unconsciously alter the past every time we rethink or retell it. We put down to wisdom and foresight what was merely luck; we think we aimed at what merely fell into our lap. We think we were miserable at one time and happy at another; but it is certain that, as a wise Frenchman has said, we are never either so happy or so unhappy as we suppose. Dull care, says Horace, sits behind the horseman; but we generally forget that he is there. And our happy years were years when, as we regretfully confess when they are gone, we did not know how well off we were.

The wise man does not grudge the time spent in keeping his memory green. How much love and care were lavished upon us when we were thoughtless children, accumulating debts which we can never repay, and which we can only acknowledge by passing on some of what we owe to our parents to our children! I have several cases full of my mother's letters, beautifully written and full of the wistful anxiety of a good woman for her son. The art of letter-writing has fallen on evil days; few of us have time for it, or we think we have no time. And the younger generation seldom keeps letters. But they are a part of our past lives, and, if we are wise, we shall lose no opportunity of linking our days together, as Wordsworth says, by natural piety. There is a real danger in this hurrying and irreverent age that the bonds which unite past and present may be snapped, that the traditions which make our national life one and continuous may be lost, and that so we may forfeit part of our heritage as actors in a moving pageant which began long ago, which has been, in spite of all defects, worthy of love and admiration, but the end of which is uncertain and unknown. Those only can care intelligently for the future of England to whom her past is dear.

Important Notice!

THE LAND OF MIST

or,

The Quest of Edward Malone

By

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

IN next month's issue we begin a serial which will, we venture to say, attract world-wide interest. It deals with the borderland of human knowledge and experience, which fade away into "The Land of Mist."

Whether one agrees or disagrees, it is an undoubted fact that psychic questions are before the world at present as they have never been before. It will also be admitted that our contributor, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, can claim an almost unique experience in such matters, having studied them for thirty-six years, and being now elected Honorary President of the French Spiritual Association, which is the central body of the world. He has thrown some of these experiences into narrative form, painting with a full brush both the weakness and the strength of the movement. The false medium is drawn with a relentless accuracy. Many of the almost incredible scenes and incidents which he depicts have, he assures us, either occurred to himself or to those whose testimony cannot be doubted. The whole is executed with that vivid force and sense of drama which have given Sir Arthur his great hold over the public. We venture to think that whatever are the conclusions of the public they will be amazed at the adventures which are still to be encountered in this workaday world.

In conclusion, we may say that our friends of

"THE LOST WORLD" and "THE POISON BELT,"

Professor Challenger,
Lord Roxton,
and
Mr. Malone,

are among the chief persons of the drama.

"If we can get this car to go,

The Man Who Married for Money

MR. BENNINGTON'S car had broken down. If he had not been the embodiment of good nature he might have shown annoyance, for it was already ten minutes past his dinner hour, and the chauffeur was still fiddling about with cogs and things inside the bonnet, and there was three miles yet to cover.

But Mr. Bennington sat back placidly, his squat little figure sunk amidst the cushions, his large pale eyes blinking pleasantly in the sunlight. For a man who conducted a large printing and reference-book publishing works, he was surprisingly ignorant about the mechanism of cars. And he had no great faith in his rather lugubrious chauffeur.

"Can you manage it, Potter?" he asked at last.

"I think I can do it, sir," replied the man, surlily. "The main jet in the carburetter is stopped up."

Mr. Bennington's mind wandered a little. He thought of his daughter, April, waiting dinner for him at Stoney Cross Towers. April! Since his wife's death many years ago, April had been all the world to him. She was now twenty-six, not what one would call a pretty woman, but comely, sweet, unselfish, and clever. And a distressing doubt had lately come into Mr. Bennington's mind. It had only occurred to him quite recently. April was at that age when she might seriously contemplate marriage. He had become abruptly aware that there was a young clergyman making himself very much at home in his house. And he had seen April walking with the son of Sir John Gable, the coal merchant. Mr. Bennington was not even aware that April knew this young man. It was very

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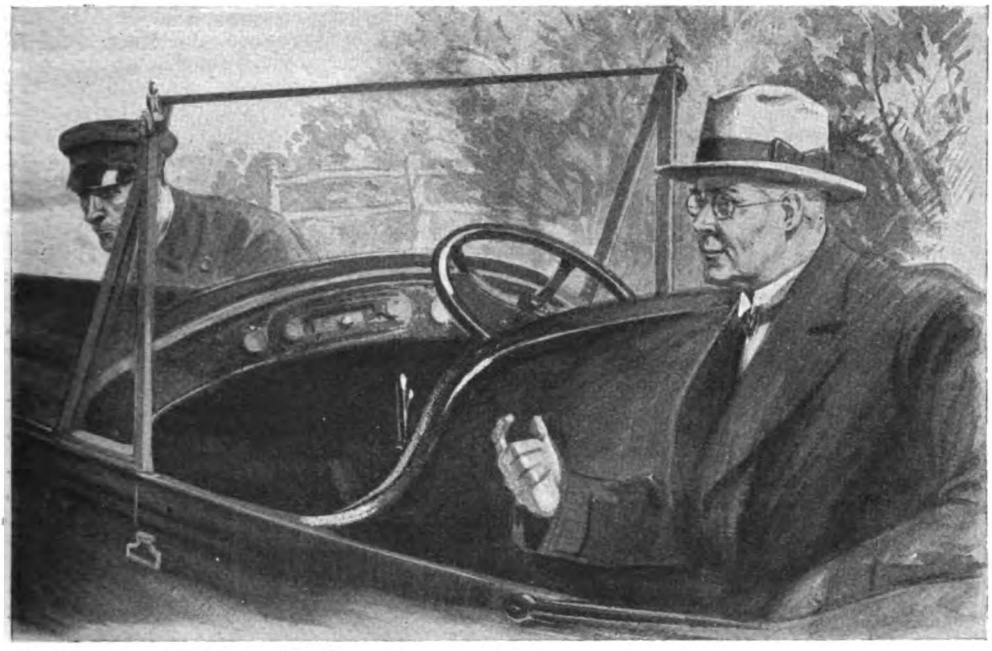


I'll give you a lift if you like."

By STACY AUMONIER

ILLUSTRATED BY CONRAD LEIGH

disturbing. He had visions of himself returning home on such a night as this—to a lonely dinner. It would be intolerable. Would Potter never get the thing right? Glancing up the road he was aware of a tall figure approaching. He thought for a moment that it was a tramp. But there was something about the man that attracted him. He was shabby, and he carried a stick and a bundle, but he did not walk like a tramp. On nearer approach Mr. Bennington noticed that he was clean-shaven, and his thin face was cast on more or less classic lines. His eyes were blue and piercing, like a sailor's or a man who lives in the open air. As he came alongside the car he glanced at Mr. Bennington and suddenly stopped.

"Excuse me," he said, "but can you direct me to Stebbing?"

Mr. Bennington was struck by the contrast between the man's shabby clothes and his cultivated voice.

"You're coming away from it," he answered. "If we can get this car to go we are passing through it, and I'll give you a lift if you like."

The stranger looked astonished and a little wistful. His voice took on a husky note.

"Thank you very much," he said. "I don't know why you should, but I——"

"I don't know why I shouldn't, I'm sure. Come along, step in."

Mr. Bennington was a man who loved humanity. Queer and unusual characters made a strong appeal to him, and here was one indeed. At the best the fellow might relieve the tedium of his wait. At the worst—if he proved to be a beggar or a wrong 'un—he could be dismissed with a shilling or so.

The stranger sank into the cushions with a sigh. Mr. Bennington watched him closely, and waited for him to pour out a tale of woe. But he did not speak.

"Are you staying at Stebbing?" Mr. Bennington asked at last.

"For the night, perhaps."

"Ah! Um! I suppose you—er—walking tour, eh?"

"I want to find the churchyard there."

Churchyard! Now that seemed a queer, funny quest! What should a man like this be seeking a churchyard for? The answer was given him.

"I want to visit my father's grave."

His father's grave! The fellow was a romantic. Or was this the preamble to some sentimental story leading up to a demand for money? Quite at random he said:—

"What was your father's name?"

"Morniment."

"Morniment! You don't mean Henry Morniment, the solicitor!"

"Yes, he was my father."

"But I knew him. He did business for me on several occasions. He was a very respected lawyer, a good fellow. Till he ——"

"I know."

"He died bankrupt, didn't he?"

"Yes. I was in Canada when it happened."

"Dear, dear! I'm sorry. Very distressing. You—er——"

Mr. Bennington could not quite see how to express himself. The fellow was evidently down and out. His father had certainly died bankrupt, but the son looked a capable, decent fellow. Why wasn't he working? What was his profession? He glanced furtively at the frayed sleeves and the ancient battered boots. As though reading his thoughts, the other said:—

"You are wondering why I'm like this. I'll tell you. I'm just one of a legion."

"A legion?"

"Or shall I say a legacy—a legacy of the war?"

"Ah! I understand. You were wounded, or—shell-shock?"

"No. I never got a scratch. Only—morally wounded, soul-shocked."

"Dear me!"

"I was twenty-two when the thing started, had just come down from Cambridge, interested in Rugger and squash rackets, little else. I joined up and went through the whole business, France, Gallipoli, Egypt, Italy. I was twenty-seven when I got my discharge. That is to say, I had to begin to think of a career when I was twenty-seven, sir. Begin! I went into my father's office, but six months of it was enough for me. It was not so much that I saw the interminable push ahead of me even if I succeeded, it was the restlessness ingrained through Army life. Having things always planned for one, the combination of indolence and thrill. When the spring came——

"My father was angry with me. He paid my passage to Canada and gave me fifty pounds. The poor old chap had been badly hit by the war himself. As you know, he died two years later—in debt. I wandered the earth. But there is nothing for a man nearly thirty without any special training or ability or capital. One is simply an unskilled workman or a hobo, a drag on society. I knew after a time that I had been a fool. I should have buckled down, but I just somehow couldn't. When the go-fever gets you, it's terrible——"

"And what have you been doing since, Morniment?"

"You see me now. I'm thirty-three. I've done nothing you could give a name to. I'm a cipher in the great legacy."

"And what are you going to do now?"

"I had a fancy to visit my father's grave. And then——"

"And then?"

The younger man made a vague gesture in the direction of the open sky.

Mr. Bennington coughed, and fumbled for his pipe. The car made a welcome burring sound. He called out:—

"Is it all right, Potter?" and then murmured thickly: "Well, well——"

The chauffeur got back into his seat and the car jerked forward. For half a mile neither man spoke. The car made a great commotion. At length Mr. Bennington shouted into his neighbour's ear:—

"Will you come home and dine with me? Visit churchyard to-morrow. No, no, quite all right. Only my daughter there—quite unconventional. No men-servants. See what we can do to-morrow. Quite all right, really. Not at all! Not at all! Quite all right!"

IN less than ten minutes the car drew up at Stoney Cross Towers, a commodious modern building in the style of good Queen Anne, set in a lovely garden.

Mr. Bennington ushered his guest into the hall, and said:—

"Just wait one moment, Morniment."

He was absent for two or three minutes, and then returned with his daughter. Morniment beheld a girl of about twenty-six, rather round and plump, with kind grey eyes and very fair skin. She held out her hand and said:—

"Very pleased to see you, Mr. Morniment."

Whatever her father had said, one thing was very evident. For the whole of the evening she never once appeared to glance at his clothes. This could not be said of the two maids who waited at dinner. They were

apparently so fascinated that they nearly dropped the dishes, and Morniment was certain that they were sniggering together in the corner.

It was an excellent dinner, and a bottle of Volnay produced in Morniment a comfortable sense of ease. It was many years since he had sat at a rich man's table, and memories of the past flooded through him. What a fool he had been! If he had only buckled down, as his father had tried to persuade him, he might be now dining in such luxury every night. They spent a quiet evening, the two men talking about foreign lands and customs, April occasionally joining in, but always occupied with a needle. She went to bed at half-past ten, but the others continued to talk until midnight. Mr. Bennington had taken a very definite liking to his guest. He insisted upon his staying the night, and said that on the morrow he would find him a new outfit of clothes, and that it would give him great pleasure; if Morniment cared to stay in those parts he would try and find him suitable employment. When Morniment rolled between the clean white sheets that night he gave a luxurious chuckle. There was, after all, a good deal to be said for civilization. He was a hobo, a wanderer on the face of the earth, and he had "struck lucky" for once. Let the old fool try and find him a job. If it suited him he would keep it—for a time. If it didn't, or the place began to pall, he could always move on. The wine was very good, and a whisky toddy last thing at night was a luxury not to be sneezed at.

Life had not treated him so kindly that he should scruple over taking what plums happened to drop into his lap. He had never been dishonest, but he had long since discarded any ambitions to be a respectable citizen. Nothing but some astounding fluke could make him so. He didn't care. He sank into a profound and happy sleep.

HE was awakened the next morning by a maid—it was nearly half-past nine. She brought him a blue serge suit and a change of linen, "with Mr. Bennington's compliments." He bathed, dressed, regarded his appearance in the mirror with satisfaction, and then went downstairs.

He met Miss Bennington in the hall, bringing in a basket of cut roses. She smiled at him friendlily.

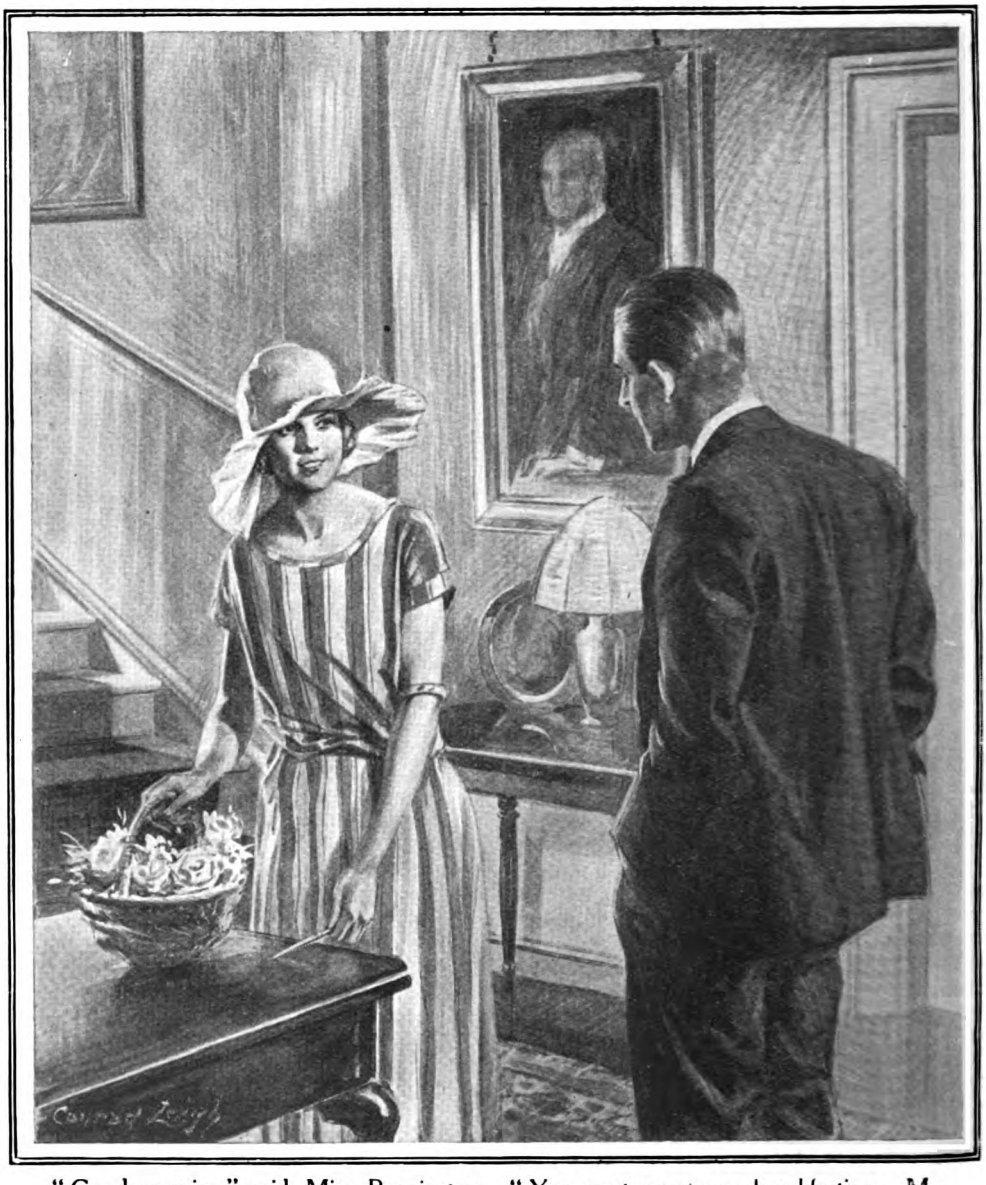
"Good morning," she said. "You must excuse us breakfasting. My father had to go off to business early. He told me to ask you if you would spend the day as you like but return this evening, as he wants to see you, and hopes to have some news for you. Your breakfast is laid in the dining-room. Come, I will see that there is some fresh coffee."

Ted Morniment revelled in the almost forgotten experience of being waited on by a lady, of having his coffee poured out for him, and helping himself from little silver dishes. He felt shy and embarrassed, conscious that the daughter of the house was doing her utmost to put him at his ease. He was terribly anxious not to appear to be taking advantage of the situation, or to be abusing this surprising hospitality. He talked jerkily about the weather, and asked the best way to walk to Stebbing churchyard.

When he had escaped from his hostess's attentions, he set out to walk there, determined to remain away all day. Once upon the road an almost unholy desire possessed him not to return. What was the use of coquetting once more with the allurements of social life? He was an outcast. This charity and kindliness made him feel a fool.

He found the churchyard, and the plain stone slab that marked his father's grave. A lump came in his throat when he beheld the grim memorial. The days of his youth came vividly before him, the happy days of childhood. The enduring devotion of his father and mother seemed to mock him. What had made him so cynical and indifferent? It was so easy to blame the war, the demoralization caused by the war, but there was something in him that had not fought its best. What was it to have won the Military Cross, and yet to have been a moral coward? He had deserted his father in his old age. He might have helped him, might even have saved him.

He sat about in the churchyard dreaming until past noon. Then he picked up his stick and began to walk—away from Stoney Cross Towers. He walked for miles until the heat of the day overcame him. He bought bread and cheese and a glass of ale at an inn, and, when he had paid his reckoning, realized that he had just one shilling and a penny, the remainder of his pay for working as a labourer in a timber yard. He was not unused to finding himself with only a shilling between himself and starvation, and the prospect did not alarm him. But as the afternoon wore on a great sense of listlessness possessed him. He was at present in the prime of life, but the day would come—middle age, old age, friendless, rheumaticky perhaps, living from hand to mouth, ending his days in a workhouse or a ditch. What did it matter? As the evening began to creep on his mind became occupied with the idea of the good dinner at Mr. Bennington's, the clean sheets, the modulated lights, the cheeriness of his host, the gentle voice of the daughter. It would be



"Good morning," said Miss Bennington. "You must excuse us breakfasting. My father had to go off to business early."

perverse to forego these things, perverse and unkind to his well-meaning friends. Besides, was there not the suggestion of a job? He would have to find work within the next twelve hours. He hesitatingly retraced his steps. His strange reluctance to return he could not account for. It was as though the nuances of this household jarred his sensibilities and produced in him disturbing qualms. His connection could only be of a temporary nature, and the inevitable void to follow would make his life seem emptier than ever.

Nevertheless, he did return and found Mr. Bennington waiting for him.

"Ah, Morniment!" exclaimed that gentleman. "I'm glad you came back. One can never tell with you wandering people. I said to my daughter: 'The odds are about level on his returning,' but we are prepared for you. I expect you would like a bath, and then I've got a suggestion to make to you."

Over dinner Mr. Bennington unfolded his plan. He had thought of all kinds of things. Of course, it would be quite easy to get him some kind of a manual or mechanical job in his own works, but there was no particular future to it. He would have to serve an apprenticeship, and the unions were very strict about unqualified hands. But could Morniment drive a car? No? Never mind, that could be managed. He was very dissatisfied with Potter. The man was surly, and something was always going wrong. The fellow was lazy. He—Mr. Bennington—would be willing to pay for Morniment to have lessons in the market town five miles away. When he was proficient he should supersede Potter, who was under notice of dismissal. He could then occupy Potter's rooms, which were comfortable and airy, and which were built over the garage. In the meantime he would get him a room in the village. What did he say?

Morniment blinked at the cutlery and the bowl of Maréchal Niel roses. For a second he flushed. He had stayed for twenty-four hours as a guest on a social equality. The obvious implication of the severance of this position came as a slight shock. But it was only momentary. After all, what could he expect? Mr. Bennington had taken him at his face value. Why should he do anything at all? It was extraordinarily kind of him, and he gave a somewhat incoherent expression of his thanks.

He had a certain flair for mechanics, and to be a qualified chauffeur would in any case supply him with a definite means of support. He repeated: "It's very kind of you, very kind indeed," and he glanced a little guiltily at the daughter, as though apologizing for inflicting the presence of the chauffeur upon her at dinner. There was nothing about her expression to betray her recognition of such an outrage. On the contrary, she smiled brightly, and appeared to regard his acceptance as a kindness. Two friends came in later, a Mr. and Mrs. Bordone, and he was introduced to them as "a son of my old friend, Henry Morniment." Mrs. Bordone sang some Hungarian folk-songs. She had a vibrant contralto voice. with a rough edge that seemed to augment the passion of their implication. April was no musician. She sat Madonna-like, silhouetted against the open window, her eyes charged with wonder and a kind of disturbing fear.

Morniment was disturbed also. He felt like a hungry man regarding a banquet through an iron cage. If everything had been different—perhaps he had powers that might have been aroused. Thirty-three and going to be a chauffeur! Was it too late?

Suddenly he was aware that the eyes of the daughter of the house were fixed upon him in a queer, imploring way. For a second he held them in his, and then she looked away, out of the window, at the moon perhaps, hanging idly above the dark line of the elms. He felt a sudden jolt of pride, as of one who has discovered his manhood for the first time. When the music ceased the romantic phase passed also. He only felt a little exhilarated and reckless. He helped himself freely to his host's whisky. When he retired for the night he once more chuckled as he curled between the sheets. He was more than ever "the tramp who had struck lucky." He awoke the next day eager for what it might bring forth. A bicycle was found for him and he cycled over to Nessborough with Mr. Bennington's letter and cheque to the motor school. In an hour's lesson he had grasped the rudimentary elements of motor-driving. He meant to work and concentrate, and the instructor gave him a manual to study.

IT seemed strange at night to go to the lodgings in the village. Although he had only known them twenty-four hours the Benningtons seemed like old friends. And it was difficult to persuade himself that he must begin to regard himself only in the light of an *employé*. He foresaw that he was in any case to be let down lightly. Mr. Bennington said:—

"Come up and see us any time you like, Morniment. I hope you will come and dine with us now and then."

And then he patted him on the shoulder and laughed.

"Quite a romance, you know," he said. "Fancy my old friend Henry Morniment's son—my chauffeur. You must understand, Morniment, there's no nonsense about me. I've made my own way in the world. I've been down too. Because you're down now we don't regard you as a social inferior. I don't give a damn for public opinion. I want you because you may be useful to me, and I'd like to help you because I like you and I knew your father, but we don't want any 'sir-ing' or 'madam-ing,' you understand."

The man was the soul of kindness.

It took Ted Morniment just two months to learn to drive Mr. Bennington's car sufficiently well to be entrusted with the responsibility, and the doleful and unsatisfactory Potter was duly sacked, and Ted moved over and established himself in the rooms above the garage. The tramp had indeed "struck lucky." But he did not at that time realize how lucky he had

struck. His duties consisted in running Mr. Bennington over to his works at Nessborough in the morning and fetching him at night. For the rest he had to keep the car in order and be at the disposal of Miss Bennington when she required him, and occasionally take them both for runs over the week-end. At first the novelty of his occupation, and the consciousness of being for the first time a useful member of society, enthralled him. He was intensely happy. The relationship between himself and the Benningtons worked out more satisfactorily than he could have hoped. He was expected to perform his duties, but apart from that they treated him like a friend. He on his part was extremely careful not to abuse the opportunities this position offered. He never visited them uninvited, and never addressed them with undue familiarity. At first Miss Bennington seldom seemed to require the car, and finding considerable time on his hands, he made himself useful to the manager of the Nessborough motor works, and incidentally learnt a lot more about his profession.

THE winter months went by uneventfully, but with the coming of the spring his affairs reached an unexpected *dénouement*.

Of course people had been talking. Allowing for the fact that old Bennington was a kind-hearted eccentric, it was even then a bit thick to find the chauffeur actually dining with the family! The inhabitants of that part of the world had not a great deal to talk about. Also the house had many servants. He was aware of whispers and innuendoes. There was an element of romance about the whole thing which appealed strongly to the busybodies.

But this was only a minor factor in the rapid development of the drama.

With the coming of spring came the old restless feeling. The go-fever was tugging at his sleeves. After all, what was it to be a chauffeur? What did it lead to? Wasn't his position undignified, ignominious, especially if people started laughing and hinting?

But even that was not all. With the coming of spring came a more decisive tumult, a portent to which he could not shut his eyes. When he first arrived at the house he frequently noticed a young clergyman in attendance. As the winter wore to its close this young gentleman's visits became less frequent. There was also a young man with whom Miss Bennington used to go riding. He also disappeared into the *Ewigkeit*. The girl began to take more motor rides, to appear preoccupied, and in some queer way unhappy. That momentary romantic incident which occurred on the night when Mrs. Bordone had sung had not been repeated. But with the coming of spring it was impossible for him to ignore the fact that his employer's daughter had become more alert to himself. He found her dreamily gazing at him. She was always requiring motor trips on apparently abortive errands. She appeared self-conscious in his presence, and sometimes blushed confusedly.

And one May day he said to himself:—

"Dash it all! this girl is falling in love with me. I must clear off!"

And yet he didn't go. He heard her father ragging her one day on the disappearance of the "Reverend Andrew." The word "romance" seemed to be ever in the air.

And then one day came the temptation of a similar kind to that which waylaid St. Anthony. They had returned from a drive, and he had handed her out of the car. She stood by the porch as though about to enter. Then suddenly she turned and looked at him with shining eyes.

"Are you quite happy here?" she said, quietly.

He hesitated, honour and an inner devilry struggling for mastery.

"I'm quite happy, thank you, Miss Bennington."

"There's nothing else you—want?"

A cynical smile twisted his mouth. He looked at her in a way that is easy for any young man to look at any young woman—when she invites it.

"No," he whispered. "There is nothing more that I—that I am worthy of."

"You do not come in and see us so often as you used to."

There was little in the words, but in the manner there was the suggestion of desperate surrender. He was anxious to get away, and muttering something about putting up he drove off.

Romance, eh? he laughed eagerly, as the tramp will laugh when he finds the back door open and the householder away for the day. All so easy! He put the car up and went for a walk across the fields. Spring! and the great open spaces yearning for him. Spring, and the easy passion which comes at the budding of the flowers. So easy, so easy! What though he didn't love her as he should, he would be what is known as a "gentleman" once more. The old man would assuredly come up to the scratch. He would set him up in business. In a few years he might be rich. He would be respected, he would be terribly loved. It was perhaps the only chance that might ever occur to him for the rest of his life.

Suddenly she turned and looked at him with shining eyes. "Are you quite happy here?" she said.

Of late he had made strides in the good opinion of the Nessborough motor works people. There was some kind of future there. Heavens! yes, in a short time he might be offered a position sufficient to marry some decent girl of the countryside. But April Bennington, the daughter of old man Bennington, who everyone said was worth—well, the amount varied, but he was known as one of the richest men in those parts. No more work at all if he liked. Wandering abroad, perhaps. Italy, the East, China, the South Seas—he gasped, and his eyes tried to read the secrets of the golden light as the sun began to sink. He looked at his watch. Nearly seven, and the Benningtons dined at eight. He pulled himself up and walked quickly home. He did a thing he had never done before. He wrote a note to Miss Bennington: "May I dine with you to-night?—E. M." He gave it to one of the housemaids to deliver, and in a few minutes came back the answer: "Father and I will be delighted. We shall be alone.—A. B."

And that night old man Bennington, who suffered from twinges of sciatica, retired to bed early, and left the young couple alone. And Morniment played his part like one in a dream. Half-acting, half-drunk with life, he made the lover a living person. Only at moments was he tortured by the essential purity of those trusting eyes.

Once having assumed the erotic attitude he was determined not to look back. And it was not difficult. The girl was every way attractive, even if he did not love her as he should.

It took the old man two days to recover from the shock of the avowal. Somehow or other it had never occurred to him that such a thing might happen. He went about muttering: "Well, well—romance, indeed!"

On the third day he came round and gave the promised union his blessing.

"I shall still expect you to drive me, Morniment," he said. "I can't keep on changing my chauffeur to suit foolish lovers. Well, well."

"I shall consider it a privilege, sir," replied Morniment, and that was the first time he had addressed his employer as "sir."

They were married in the autumn, and went for a long honeymoon in Sicily and Algeria. It was arranged that, as Mr. Bennington was getting feeble and was alone in the world, the young couple should continue to live with him. Mr. Bennington

took shares in the motor works, and thus assured Morniment of a more important position. He was also relieved of the position of being his father-in-law's chauffeur, although on his return he frequently drove him to and from his office in his own newly-acquired car.

The tramp had "struck lucky" beyond his wildest dreams.

NOW there is a paradox much in use which refers to people "marrying and settling down," as though marriage, by its very provisions, is not one of the most unsettling experiences there is!

For nearly a year Morniment persuaded himself that he had "married and settled down."

After an aimless and nugatory life he had, through the mere accident of asking the way to an obscure churchyard, found everything that the heart of man might desire—love, wealth, and an honourable career. His wife adored him. Sometimes her love for him terrified him. She called him "Peter." He never asked the reason for this. But he surmised that she had always dreamed of a "Peter," someone who was to be the idol of her life. She had been waiting for him. And *he* had come.

And then Ted Morniment would take himself on one side and say:—

"You cad! You are not 'Peter'! You are a wretched usurper, an impostor. You married this good woman in cold blood for her money!"

And as time went on this conviction became an obsession. He became fond of her, but there were moments when he was afraid to look her in the eyes. Moreover, he felt that he had repaid the kindness of his old benefactor, Mr. Bennington, by an act of treachery. The tramp had found the back door open, and the temptation had been too much for him.

His concentration on honest work tended to stiffen his moral fibre, and at the same time helped him to see things more clearly and uncompromisingly. His cynicism was yielding to a higher conscience. And as it did so the more ashamed did he become. His wife's simplicity mocked him. He was unworthy of her.

It seemed surprising, after his vagrant life, to have someone deeply concerned about every little detail of his clothes, his food, his petty comforts. The solicitude distressed him. At times when she used endearing terms to him he felt tempted to cry out:—

"Oh, my dear, don't, don't! It's all false. I married you for your money!"

Even if he could only love her *as he should*, the treachery had already been perpetrated. And at times the old wanderlust nearly overcame him. He visualized the sense of freedom that would come to him if he could pin a full confession on her pillow, and then creep out and find himself upon the open road! It was only the knowledge that this act would nearly kill her that prevented him from doing it, and the fact that it would mean a double treachery upon her father.

The old man had sold out his business and spent his time reading *The Financial News* and checking the movements of his speculations. And Morniment continued to work and to fret. In the evening he would sit in the white-panelled drawing-room, listening to his father-in-law talking of stocks and shares. He was subtly aware that the old man was implying that all this money was one day to be in Morniment's charge for his beloved daughter and, perhaps, her children. And feeling like a thief, he would glance apprehensively at his wife, intent on making little garments, consumed by the magic of creation.

Once he had occasion to go to Birmingham on business for his firm. He was away five days. Staying in a sombre hotel in that city, and all alone, an irresistible desire came over him to write and tell his wife the truth, and to say that he must leave her. As her father was rich, she would be well cared for, and would come to forget the tramp who had outraged her life. He wrote the letter and carried it about in his pocket for days.

He then decided that this would be too cruel a way of doing it. She would be alone when the blow fell. No, it would be better to tell her. He must see her once for the last time.

It was a bleak March day when he arrived back at Stoney Cross Towers. As he walked up the drive he noticed that, although it was nearly dark, only a dim light appeared to be burning in the hall. He let himself in. The house seemed unnaturally quiet. He thought for a moment everyone was out. Then he heard a movement in the drawing-room, the door of which was open. He walked in quietly. April was standing at the window looking into the garden. She turned as he entered. Her face was only just visible, but he could see that she was deathly pale, and that her eyes were blinded with tears. He went straight up to her and whispered hoarsely:—

"What is it?"

She put her hands on his shoulders and her voice was almost inaudible, as though drowned in grief and weariness.

"Oh, Peter, darling, I'm so glad you've come! Something awful has happened."

Whatever it was, he knew in that instant that the mission he had embarked upon was completely annulled. He held her tightly in his arms, only vaguely taking in the tragic story she had to tell. It was sufficient that she needed him, and the pathos of her supplication burned through the liquid depths of her eyes. Her father, he gathered, was ruined—some rash speculation prompted by a chance acquaintance leading to disaster. But that was not all. The shock to the old man had caused a stroke. He was lying upstairs, partially paralysed, in danger of his life.

In the whirl of his emotions reacting to this tragic story, several concrete facts, important and unimportant, flashed through his mind. With an almost ironic sense of satisfaction he became revealed to himself — the tramp who could repay. Automatically he thought of his position in the motor works and the offer of the partnership that had been made to him the previous week. He even thought of the exact amount of his probable income this year and in the years to come. In any case the old man could have all that he required; April could be comforted and made happy. These reflections were the work of a moment. But above and beyond that, and around it and enveloping it, was the blinding realization that if he was indispensable to April, she was equally indispensable to him. He felt her damp cheek pressed against his own, and he knew that he loved her "as she should be loved." The doubts and misapprehensions of the past vanished. The "treachery" became a triumph. He felt virile, and yet limp with the love and sympathy he felt for this woman, in whose eyes the mother-light struggled to defend its precious burden against the shafts of an overpowering menace.

"My dear—my dear!" were the only words of comfort that fell from his lips.

But he knew they were sufficient. She closed her eyes and clung to him in the fading light, sighing happily, like a child against the bosom of its mother—this woman he had married for money.

"Oh, Peter, darling, I'm so glad you've come! Something awful has happened."

My Pretty Cousin Again

By

DENIS MACKAIL

ILLUSTRATED BY S. BRIAULT

AT this date I am unable to remember whether it was a cold in my Uncle George's head or the warmth of my pretty cousin's heart that had landed us all down at Newcliff in the month of July. Uncle George is always having colds in the head—regardless of the time of year—and Audrey is always having affairs of the heart—regardless of everything; and the sequel in either case is apt to be a visit to the seaside, in which the principal offenders are accompanied by my Aunt Clara, for obvious family reasons, and by myself, for no reason which I have ever been able to discover. I once, though, overheard Aunt Clara telling someone that I was "so safe"; and if this means that I never answer my uncle back when he loses his temper, and have learnt to act as a reliable door-mat for my pretty cousin's feet, then I suppose it is true enough. Anyhow, I am usually asked to join the party, though—as a tribute to my relationship—I am always expected to pay for myself.

So there we all were—stopping at the Stupendous—and all, I am afraid, pretty much at a loose end. We would go pottering about the front, and pottering out for little drives, and pottering back again for our meals. After dinner Audrey and I would dance, and after that we would continue our efforts to teach her parents Mah-Jongg. Aunt Clara was quite hopeless, and Uncle George was the kind of student who always wanted a reason for everything. He is the victim of a deeply suspicious nature, and whenever Audrey or I tried to tell him anything we were always met with the same answer.

"Yes, yes. I know all that," he would say. "But why?"

There never was such a fellow for asking silly questions.

"Because it says so in the rules," we would explain. And then Uncle George would snort contemptuously and make a number of disparaging observations about the Chinese nation as a whole, which would continue until it was suddenly discovered that Aunt Clara had nineteen tiles in her rack. After that we had to go back to the beginning.

No, I cannot pretend that any of us were giving much care to the development of our intellects during this visit; and yet I will say on my own behalf that I read myself to sleep each night with a most respectable volume of memoirs, whereas Audrey—well, I wish you could have seen the kind of stuff that girl used to buy at the news-stand in the hall. She stopped at nothing. She would ask openly, without a vestige of shame, for periodicals whose very titles made me blush. Worse still, she would send me downstairs to get them for her.

"Have you got *Chippy Bits?*" I heard myself inquiring on one occasion.

The boy behind the counter shook his head, but I felt that he had sized me up when he added:—

"I've got *Snappy Snips*, sir, if that will do."

"It will do admirably," I said, groaning in the depths of my soul; and I took it upstairs with me to the sitting-room.

"Here you are," I said, dropping it on to my pretty cousin's lap. "This was the best they could do for you."

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"You're a lamb," she replied. "Did you remember the chocolates?"

I handed them over.

"Now don't interrupt," she added. "I'm going to enjoy myself."

There can be no defence for a young woman like that. None at all. Unless, of course, she is good-looking.

Five minutes later my pretty cousin suddenly gave a loud squeak and kicked the leg of my chair. I opened my eyes.

"What's the matter now?" I asked. "Do you want a cigarette?"

"No," she said. "At least, you can fill my case if you like. But I say, just read what it says here."

"Must I?"

"Idiot," said Audrey. "I tell you there's a chance of making twenty pounds."

She had, of course, told me nothing of the sort; but when Audrey's eyes sparkle like that, one follows the line of least resistance.

"How?" I inquired. "Is it a Limerick?"

"No, you antediluvian old fossil," said my pretty cousin. "But they're sending a man to all the seaside towns, and all you've got to do is to go up to him and say, 'Hullo, Mr. Snappy Snips!' and he gives you twenty pounds. And what's more——" here she jumped out of her chair and upset all the chocolates on the floor—"and what's more, he's coming here—to Newcliff—to-morrow."

"Oh!" I said. "Are you suggesting that I should go about——"

"Of course not. I'm going to win it for myself."

I looked up from where I was kneeling on the carpet.

"Listen to me, Audrey," I said. "Before you start getting us all into trouble, will you allow me to point out that according to the *Newcliff Argus* there are at present nearly a hundred thousand people living in this town, and that some of them may object to being addressed by someone whom they don't know in the manner that you describe?"

"If you weren't so frightfully clever," replied Audrey, "you'd remember that more than half of them are women and children. It's only the men I shall be after."

"That," I said, disregarding the flaw in my statistics, "is precisely my point. If it were only the women and children that you were proposing to insult, it wouldn't be so bad. But you're a great deal too—too——"

"Too what?" asked my pretty cousin.

"Never mind. The fact remains that you're not to do it."

"Because you say so?"

"No," I explained. "But because you haven't the faintest idea what the fellow looks like, and you don't need twenty pounds, and——"

"I *always* need twenty pounds," interrupted my pretty cousin. "And if you hadn't been too superior to look for yourself, you'd have seen that they've printed the man's photograph. There," she added, holding out the copy of *Snappy Snips*. "Look at that."

I TOOK it from her and studied the so-called portrait. It was one of the poorest examples of the half-tone process that I have ever seen, and in so far as it suggested a human face at all it was both repellent and grotesque. I was on the point of making this criticism aloud, when my eye suddenly lit on a section of the letterpress with which the illustration was surrounded.

"Oh, look here, Audrey," I said; "you can't possibly go in for this thing. Have you read the conditions?"

"Of course I have. What's wrong with them?"

"Wrong?" I echoed. "It says here that every competitor has to 'carry or wear a copy of *Snappy Snips* in a prominent and visible manner.' You simply can't go walking about the place like that!"

"Why not?" asked my pretty cousin.

"Because—— Oh, dash it, Audrey, don't you see that the whole thing is simply a bit of vulgar advertising? Why can't you leave it to the kind of people that it's meant for? Why——"

"You're a snob," interrupted my pretty cousin.

"I'm not a snob. But what would your father and mother think if they knew you were going up and down Newcliff carrying a thing like this and speaking to men you don't know? You can't do it, I tell you."

"Don't be ridiculous," said my pretty cousin. "I sha'n't be doing it by myself."

"What do you mean?" I asked, growing suddenly pale.

"You," said Audrey, "are coming with me."

I gave a short laugh.

"I shall do nothing of the sort," I said.

There was a brief silence, while I tried to pretend that the subject was closed. And then Audrey began again.

"I must say," she said, "that I did think that if I asked you to do something for me—something *perfectly* harmless—— But you're always the same. You see that I'm bored to death down here, and yet if I ask you to do anything at all to liven things up, you turn up your nose and try to snub me."

"I don't," I said.

"Of course," she continued, "if I go by

myself, I very likely *shall* be insulted. But you wouldn't mind that. You'd only laugh."

"My dear Audrey——"

"Well, are you coming, then?"

I gave a hollow and muffled moan.

"I suppose so," I said.

"You lamb!" cried my pretty cousin again. "You'll see, too. I'm going to get that twenty pounds if I have to speak to everybody in Newcliff. And now, just to show I've forgiven you for being so rude, I'll tell you something else."

"What's that?"

"You've got a piece of chocolate cream stuck on the knee of your trousers," said my pretty cousin.

And then, blowing me a chaste and impertinent kiss, she ran through to her bedroom.

Many times during the rest of the day I toyed with the treacherous notion of confessing everything to my uncle and aunt. I knew perfectly well that if I did so the insane plan would be knocked on the head, and it was equally true that I was bound by no promise of secrecy; and yet—well, I suppose the fact is that I was afraid of what Audrey might do in revenge. I suppose, also, that I took a certain pleasure in entering into a conspiracy with her—though previous experience of where this generally led should undoubtedly have made me more careful. And then Audrey herself was being so particularly nice and kind. She enveloped me in a flood of flattery which, however much I might and did mistrust it, made it utterly impossible to back out. "Poor child," I remember thinking. "It *is* a bit dull for her down here. And after all, as long as I'm with her to-morrow, she can't really come to any harm. When it gets to the actual point, I expect she'll soon get tired of it."

And so, when our Mah-Jongg practice was over, I retired to bed in considerably less anxiety than I had at one time thought possible. I read three pages of my volume of memoirs, and passed at once into a dreamless and uninterrupted sleep. Even when I awoke I was still calm and optimistic. "What a lot of fuss," I thought, "I have been making over nothing!"

As arranged between us last night, my pretty cousin and I met for breakfast together half an hour before our usual time—so as to avoid all awkward questions from the authorities as to how we were intending to employ the morning.

"I've told mother," said Audrey, as soon as she had greeted me, "that you're taking me for a long walk to-day, and that she's not to worry if we don't get back for lunch. That'll give us plenty of time to do the thing thoroughly."

"I see," I said. And, indeed, it seemed likely enough that Aunt Clara had been told nothing but the truth.

"And I've done another clever thing," added Audrey, a little later. "The man was at Littleport yesterday, so I've looked out the trains, and I find he can't possibly get here before ten o'clock. That'll give us a good chance to settle exactly what we're going to do."

"Why not meet the train?" I suggested.

"No, no," said my pretty cousin. "It distinctly says in the rules that you've got to speak to him on the front."

"Oh!" I said. And then I had another idea. "But what if he comes over by the motor-bus?" I asked.

My pretty cousin's fork fell into her plate with a clatter, and her eyes suddenly became larger than ever.

"The motor-bus!" she gasped. "Do you mean to say——"

"Yes," I said. "Haven't you noticed it going past the hotel?"

Her only answer was to leap to her feet, pushing the table from her so that it caught me right in the wind.

"What are you doing?" I spluttered. "Where on earth——"

"Quick!" she interrupted. "We must start at once."

"But we haven't had anything to eat yet," I pointed out.

"Never mind that. He may be here already. Here, take the paper"—she thrust her copy of *Snappy Snips* at me as she spoke—"and run like the wind. Thank Heaven our hotel is on the front!"

I would willingly have offered her a considerable sum myself to be allowed to finish my meal, but I realized well enough how useless this would be. The sporting spirit is not to be quelled by attempts at bribery. I snatched up my hat and hurried after her as fast as I could. In well under a minute we were out on the pavement.

"What do we do now?" I panted.

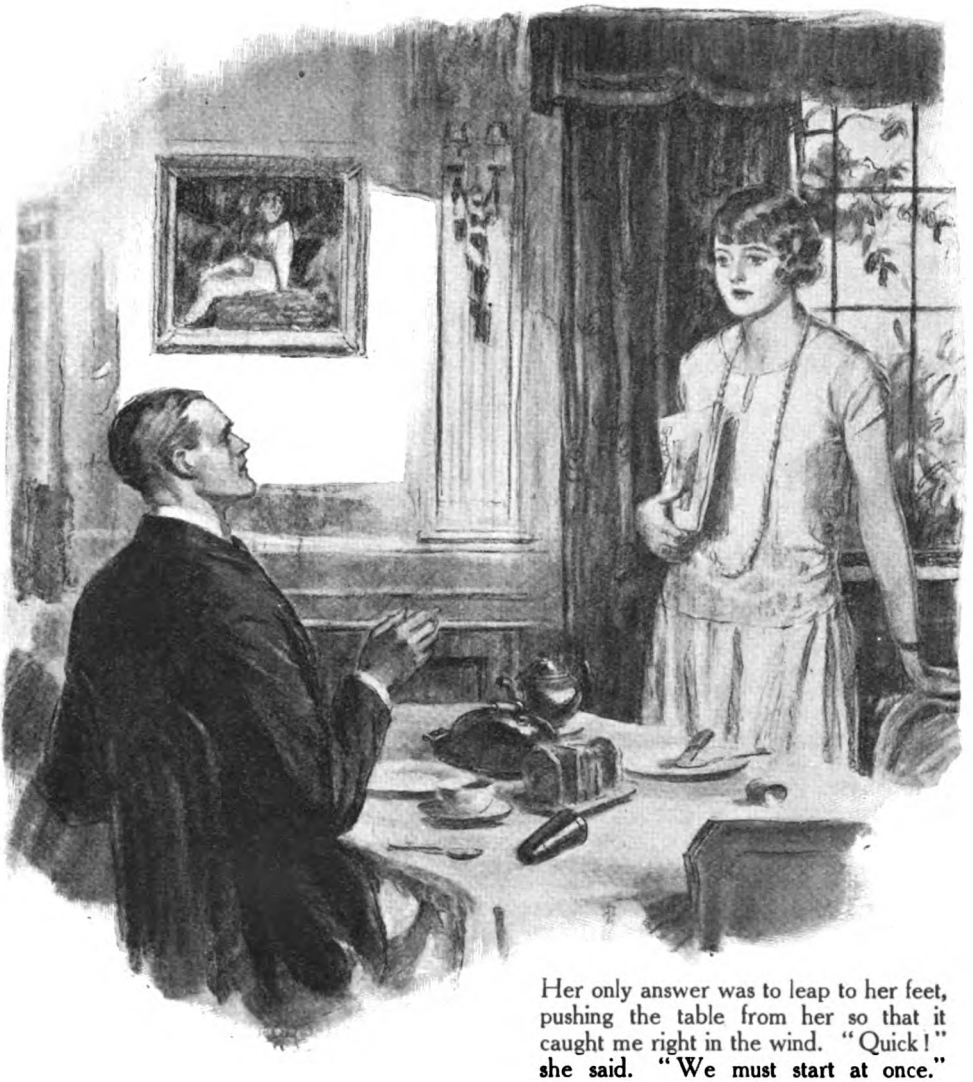
Audrey looked me over with the eye of a commander inspecting his troops.

"Don't hold the paper like that," she said. "Open it out so that people can see it."

"But look here," I protested, "oughtn't *you* to be holding it? Or wearing it?" I added, maliciously.

"No," snapped my pretty cousin. "I thought we'd settled all that yesterday. I'm going to find him, and you're going to speak to him."

"Oh!" I said. "And who's going to get the twenty pounds?"



Her only answer was to leap to her feet, pushing the table from her so that it caught me right in the wind. "Quick!" **she said. "We must start at once."**

But she was already crossing the road, and I had to run to catch up with her.

"This way," she called over her shoulder. We turned to the right and began marching along the front.

IT was a gorgeous day. Hardly a breath of wind, the sea sparkling in the sunshine and not a cloud in the sky. The sort of day, in fact, on which to turn one's back on Newcliff and its myriad visitors, to seek out some deserted spot on the downs, and to lie there on the flat of one's back with a Panama hat pulled well down over one's eyes. The sort of day for hammocks and punts, and iced drinks and cucumber sandwiches. Most decidedly not the sort of day for tramping up and down a crowded seaside esplanade.

Yet this was how my pretty cousin had chosen that we should spend it.

Of the hundred thousand human beings that the *Newcliff Argus* had stated to be available, the vast majority, I should judge, were already out on the front; and the remainder were coming along as fast as they could. The aged and infirm were in bath-chairs, the infants were mostly on scooters, and oozing about among these two classes of vehicles were hatless young men in flannels and gangs of maidens wearing the blazers of the more exclusive cricket clubs.

There were also donkeys, goats, mariners, astrologers, and venders of Newcliff Rock. Altogether it was a thoroughly lively scene.

About one person in every five was displaying a copy of *Snappy Snips* in a prominent and visible manner, and placards advertising the same publication had been freely spattered on the walls, kiosks, bandstands, and bathing-boxes. The general licence which the competition had authorized for everyone to stare inquisitively and offensively at everyone else was having full advantage taken of it. I caught hold of my pretty cousin's sleeve—what there was of it—and temporarily arrested her progress.

"Look here, Audrey," I said, "you haven't got an earthly chance in a crowd like this. Do let's get out of it while we can."

"Don't be absurd," she answered. "What else did you expect?"

"But how long have we got to go on?" I asked. "And how do we know that someone hasn't recognized the fellow already?"

"That's the kind of thing you *would* say," said my pretty cousin, disparagingly. "And we're going on until I tell you. I'm just beginning to enjoy myself."

The next instant her enjoyment was sensibly increased. A stout, elderly, and determined-looking female suddenly darted up to me, seized me by the front of my jacket, as a dog might seize a rat, and addressed me in a hoarse interrogative whisper.

"Hullo, Mr. Snappy Snips!" she said.

I was extremely and profoundly annoyed—the more so as Audrey's laughter was entirely lacking in modesty or restraint. I raised my hat with a gesture of frigid dignity.

"I am sorry to disappoint you, madam," I said, "but you appear to be labouring under a misapprehension."

To my relief—for there was a singularly obstinate look about my captor's expression—she released me at once.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "My mistake." And with these words, which I could only hope were intended as a form of apology, she bounded away into the crowd. I turned on my pretty cousin and delivered an ultimatum.

"If that happens again," I said, "I shall go straight back to the hotel."

"To tell mother that you've left me alone here?" she asked. "Don't be so selfish. We're having tremendous fun."

"I cannot agree with you," I said.

"Don't be so pompous," answered my pretty cousin. "It was all your own fault. If you hadn't hidden the paper inside your coat like that, you'd have been perfectly safe. Now hold it up properly."

So I held it up properly, and on we went.

"I say," I remarked, presently, "I'm not really like that photograph, am I?"

"Don't talk," said my pretty cousin. "You'll make me miss him."

I continued to dodge and stumble after her until we had reached the farther end of the esplanade.

"May I speak?" I asked, nervously.

"Yes," she said, after a short pause. "But hurry up."

"Well," I explained, "now that we've seen every living soul in Newcliff, how about going back to breakfast in a taxi?"

My pretty cousin stamped impatiently on the asphalt.

"You make me quite ill and tired," she said. "You've been about as much help as a blind cripple, and you've never stopped complaining for a single second. We're most certainly not going back in a taxi. We're going back the way that we came."

"Thank you," I said. "I only wanted to know."

And we plunged into the crowd again.

SO far as the competition was concerned, our return journey was quite uneventful. In other ways it was not so unadventurous, for I got a pebble inside my shoe and Audrey wouldn't let me stop to remove it. In vain I pointed out that we should see just as many people by standing still as by fighting our way along. She was adamantine.

"Don't be so tiresome," she said. "Think of the Canterbury pilgrims."

The thought held very little comfort as I hobbled after her, and when we got back to our starting-point I sat firmly down on the steps leading to the roadway—for there was nowhere else to sit—and pulled off my shoe.

"I'm terribly sorry that you should be disappointed," I said, "but, honestly, Audrey, I don't feel you're going to get that money. And I do think you ought to have something to eat."

Surely I was entitled to go this far in hinting at my own hunger. But my pretty cousin didn't seem to be listening. She was looking at her wrist-watch.

"That took us just under an hour," she said. "We ought to be able to do it twice more before lunch—even if the crowd goes on getting worse. Are you nearly ready?"

"Audrey," I said, plaintively. "Nobody admires your strength of character more than I do, but that fellow *must* have been spotted by now. We've done every inch of the front except the pier, and——"

"The pier!" she cried, excitedly. "Why didn't you suggest that before? Of course, it counts as part of the front." And she ran past me up the steps.

At the same moment my shoe-lace broke.

A stout, elderly, and determined-looking female suddenly darted up to me and seized me by the front of my jacket. "Hullo, Mr. Snappy Snips!" she said.

But there was no time to attempt any repairs. I raced after her with a curious sliding action.

"Quick!" she called out as I drew level. "Give me sixpence."

She snatched it from me, banged it down on the shelf of the pay-box, and we clanked through the turnstiles.

"Here," she added, suddenly. "I'll take the paper now. I've got an absolute hunch we're going to find him."

I was glad enough to hand it over, and we flung ourselves once more into the throng. Yet, notwithstanding my pretty cousin's alleged hunch, there was very little to distinguish our progress along the pier from our progress along the esplanade. The same crowds, the same—or similar—copies

of *Snappy Snips*, the same searching and suspicious glances as the lure of that diabolical competition spread its evil consequences among the holiday-makers. Unprotected by my talisman I was on the *qui vive*, as may be imagined, to deny my identity with the elusive quarry. But my strained, anxious, and heated countenance must, I think, have saved me. No one addressed me, and indeed, as I cannot sufficiently emphasize, my resemblance to that repulsive photograph was purely imaginary. I may not be good-looking, but at least I am not covered with black spots.

AFTER about twenty minutes of pushing and struggling we emerged at the end of the pier. There was nothing between us and the horizon now except the semicircular, cast-iron landing-stage at which coasting steamers call during the summer months. The high tide was washing within a foot or so of its surface, and save for a few motionless anglers it was practically deserted.

"Well?" I asked, turning to my pretty cousin. "Have you had enough yet?"

For the first time I thought I saw signs that her confidence was diminishing.

"It's too sickening," she said. "I was absolutely *convinced* I was going to find him on the pier. But," she added, very unreasonably, "you're enough to bring bad luck to anyone."

"When you are calmer," I replied, "you will, I hope, regret having made that observation. And, besides, if you really believed it, then——"

She stopped me by the effective method of kicking me violently on the shin.

"Look!" she exclaimed, in a feverish whisper. "Look down there!"

I followed her gaze, which was directed at the landing-stage.

"It's *him!*" she added, digging her finger-nails into the back of my hand. "I saw his face just now, when he was looking this way."

I had a very strong instinct that she was wrong, but as the man was now staring out to sea again I could bring forward no argument in its support.

"Follow me—quickly!" continued my pretty cousin, and she began descending the steps which led to the landing-stage. They were full of little square holes through which the sea could be seen flopping about, and for some reason the Corporation had economized at this point by omitting everything in the shape of a parapet or handrail. The general effect was to make me feel distinctly giddy, but Audrey obviously wasn't turning a hair.

"Come along," she said, impatiently, over her shoulder. My loose shoe made it difficult to run, but I did my best.

So we proceeded along the flat, transparent pathway, which would eventually have brought us round to the other corner of the pier; and as we advanced I suddenly noticed—hurrying towards us from its opposite end—the figure of an undersized man in a straw hat. In the same instant I observed that he was flourishing a copy of *Snappy Snips*.

Audrey must have seen him too, and have reached the conclusion at which I had just arrived. The undersized man was a most dangerous rival, and if we didn't run like hares he would beat us at the post. We did run like hares. So did the undersized man. And then as the two parties converged on their apparently unsuspecting prey, the welkin was simultaneously rent by two loud, frantic voices.

"Hullo, Mr. Snappy Snips!" they yelled.

The man in the middle turned round with a start—revealing a countenance whose resemblance to the photograph was beyond all question, even in the absence of the smudges and black spots. I was both astonished and thrilled.

"Quite right," he said. "Now which of you spoke first?"

In my own opinion the thing had been an absolute dead-heat. In my own opinion, also, Mr. Snappy Snips had already proved his entire unfitness for the delicate mission with which he had been entrusted by putting such an inquiry at all. The rules of the competition had appointed him as sole arbiter in any argument which might arise; yet here he was flinging all the responsibility back on to the competitors themselves. The result was inevitable.

"I did," shouted the man in the straw hat.

"Nonsense," retorted my pretty cousin. "Of *course* I said it first."

"You didn't, miss," said the man in the straw hat. "Did she, guv'nor?"

"I *did*," shrieked my pretty cousin. "Didn't I?" she appealed to me.

No doubt it would have been more politic if I had backed her up. But apart from my strict sense of justice, I couldn't help comparing certain other claims of the rivals. The little man in the straw hat had clearly come from a boarding-house in a back street; his clothes—showy and ill-chosen as they were—betrayed his poverty; the twenty pounds would undoubtedly turn his holiday from an expensive burden to a profitable adventure which he would remember for the rest of his life. Audrey, on the other hand, was staying in a private suite at the Stupendous Hotel, and her father had—to my certain knowledge—paid super-tax

ever since this particular impost had been invented. I certainly wasn't going to deny her claim to a half share, but I was hanged if I were going to trifle with the truth.

"If you ask me," I replied, "you both said it at the same moment."

As it turned out, this remark proved to be one of the most unfortunate that I have ever made. My pretty cousin darted me a look of cold fury, the straw-hatted claimant instantly asserted that he required no interference from toffs like me, and Mr. Snappy Snips—obviously imagining that my impartiality was an attempt to cover up my secret doubts—suddenly plumped for the opposition.

"I think the gentleman's the winner," he said.

"He isn't!" shouted my pretty cousin. "You know perfectly well that he's nothing

"Now which of you spoke first?" said Mr. Snappy Snips.
"I did," shouted the man in the straw hat.
"Nonsense," retorted my pretty cousin. "Of *course* I said it first."

of the sort. I was a good minute ahead of him."

This ill-judged exaggeration naturally did nothing to help her.

"I must remind you, madam," said Mr. Snappy Snips, "that my decision must be regarded as final." And taking two ten-pound notes from his pocket, he handed them hastily to the man in the straw hat. The latter's fist closed over them like a vice.

As for my pretty cousin, she was now on the verge of hysteria.

"It's abominable!" she cried. "You all know perfectly well that I won, and just because my idiot of a cousin lets me down you think you can—— Here!" she interrupted herself, as she detected her rival beginning to slink away. "You're not to run off like that. How *dare* you take my money! You wretched little man—you horrible, dishonourable——"

"Audrey!" I protested, in embarrassment and horror. "For Heaven's sake——"

"You worm!" she shrieked, advancing in a threatening manner towards her enemy.

I don't know whether she would actually have struck him—though in that nightmare moment anything might have been possible; for at this instant, as he turned to dodge her terrifying approach, his foot slipped. He gave a loud, high squeak as he saw what was coming; there was a thunderous splash; a column of spray dashed over the landing-stage; and the next thing I saw was a straw hat floating on the surface of the ocean. Its owner had completely disappeared.

"Help!" shouted Mr. Snappy Snips, running back towards the pier-head.

"Save him!" cried Audrey, giving me a push which all but sent me after her victim; and as I tottered dangerously on the brink, the drowning man came up for the first time.

I SHOULD like to think, in what followed, that I had qualified for the Royal Humane Society's medal—though perhaps it is a good thing that I didn't have to face an official inquiry as to the cause of the accident. I fear, however, that the rescue did not in any case involve sufficient risk to my own life. There was a further flight of steps leading down into the water, and by descending these a very short way I was enabled to grasp the successful claimant by the collar of his coat as he came spluttering up for the second time. He certainly did his best to pull me in on top of him, but after a short struggle I got him ashore. He showed very little appreciation for what I had done.

"My money!" he kept on roaring. "I've lost my money! I'll have the law of you, I will. Where's my twenty quid? Who's going to make it up to me?"

"Hush!" I said, soothingly, as the crowd began to close in round us. "Only keep quiet for a second, and I'll pay you the money."

As is so often the case, my indiscriminate charity only increased his demands.

"Ten pounds won't cover what's happened to my clothes," he said, angrily. "I shall be in the hospital after this, too. I know I shall."

"No, you won't," I said, with a desperate attempt at geniality. "You run home, and you'll be dry by the time you get there."

"Your young lady called me a worm, she did," he went on. "Twenty pounds won't cover the damage to my character."

As his total claims had now reached fifty pounds, I hastily took out my note-case and handed him twenty-five.

"Now, then," I said. "You take that, and be thankful it's all no worse."

I believe he would have spurned my offering, or at any rate have insisted on blackmailing me for the balance, if at this instant some imbecile in the crowd—seeing me, as he imagined, giving my sympathy such practical support—had not begun to clap his hands and cheer. The effect was contagious. The four or five hundred persons who had gathered on the landing-stage also began to clap their hands and cheer, and since my new acquaintance chose to start bowing his acknowledgments—under the impression that, as the principal actor, he was also the hero of the piece—I contrived to slip in among the onlookers without his spotting me. I looked everywhere for Audrey as I shouldered my way along, but there was no sign of her.

In the first comparatively empty space I wrung out the ends of my trousers, and in doing so made the distressing discovery that I had lost one of my shoes. The debt against my pretty cousin piled up, as I recalled how she had prevented my repairing that broken shoe-lace; but for the moment the only thing was to get back to the hotel. Fortunately the Stupendous is almost exactly opposite the entrance to the pier, and in less than ten minutes I had changed my clothes and made my way through to our sitting-room.

My pretty cousin was standing there alone, gazing out of the window.

"Well?" I said, closing the door behind me.

She gave no sign that she had heard me.

"Well?" I repeated, approaching a little nearer.

This time she turned round abruptly.

"Is he—is he dead?" she asked.

It was a couple of seconds before I could catch her meaning, but as soon as I did so I hastened to reassure her.

"Oh, no," I said.

"You're sure? You're not saying that just to be kind?"

"No," I answered. "I'm saying it because it's true. I've no particular wish to be kind. I've lost one of my shoes, I've spoilt a pair of trousers, and I've spent twenty-five pounds which I could very ill afford. In addition to the above I have had nothing to eat since nine o'clock last night. I think you would be putting a much more sensible question if you asked if *I* was dead."

"You!" said my pretty cousin, with a shudder. "You let me down *disgracefully!* If it hadn't been for you, I should—— Oh! it's been the most horrible morning! I've hated it. I've *loathed* it. And just because I wanted to have a little fun."

She gave a loud gulp, and—after all, she is my cousin—I caught hold of her hand.

"It's all right, Audrey," I said, hurriedly. "For Heaven's sake don't get upset. I'm sorry if I said anything rude. I've absolutely forgotten about it all. I swear I have."

"But I—I haven't forgotten," she wept. "And I was going to have—to have bought you a p-p-present with the money." The tender state of her conscience caused her to add: "With some of it, I mean."

"You weren't!" I cried—feeling, in spite of everything, both touched and flattered. "Were you really?"

She nodded. I knew she was nodding because I could feel the movement against my shoulder. And at the same moment my Uncle George came into the room.

"Hullo!" I heard him exclaim. "I say, what on earth are you doing?"

As I observed at the beginning, there never was such a fellow for asking silly questions.

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 143.

(The Third of the Series.)

CAST out by father's wrath, a youthful knight
Went with his king the infidels to fight:
A prize he won, great skill with courage blended,
And, wounded sore, by Jewish maid was tended.

1. In veins of the immortal gods it ran.
2. Where every prospect pleases, what is man?
3. At Ramoth-Gilead he met his doom.
4. Warriors at Ivry rallied round his plume.
5. A war-time play; and war-dogs know its sound.
6. This "water-fly" in Denmark once was found.
7. Carried by snow-white beast across the wave,
   Name to a continent 'tis said she gave.

JASON.

Answers to Acrostic No. 143 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on June 10th.

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 142.

(The Second of the Series.)

APRIL'S rains have had their day;
Welcome we the buds of May.

1. Breaks in might the roaring wave;
   Change one letter, 'tis a slave.
2. Flora's daughter, blue her dress.
   Half we jug and half we press.
3. Please perform, a bishop's name,
   Either way it is the same.
4. Sill and glass and sash and blind,
   All will bring the word to mind.
5. Fit for food is what we need;
   Rearrange the word, I bleed.
6. Lawns and gravel feel its weight,
   'Tis connected with a skate.
7. Upright here is seen again,
   Choose the one that tells of rain. PAX.

1. S	u r	F
2. H	a r e b e l	L
3. O	d	O
4. W	i n d o	W
5. E	d i b l	E
6. R	o l l e	R
7. S	h o w e r	S

NOTES.—Light 1. Surf, serf. 3. Bishop of Bayeux, in Norman times.

TWENTY-EIGHTH SERIES: RESULT.

Though every light in the series was found by several competitors, no one succeeded in answering all four acrostics correctly. The maximum number of points obtainable was 33, the highest number obtained was 31: fourteen solvers accomplished this, and they will divide the prizes, taking eighteen shillings each. They will also be incligible for prizes in the twenty-ninth series, now running.

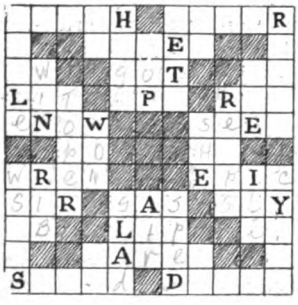
The winners are: Cyno, Mr. C. Norman, 28, Duke's Avenue, New Malden, Surrey; Dido, Miss D. Williams, Osborne House, Lansdown, Cheltenham; Forest, Mr. P. E. Herrick, 40, Arodene Road, S.W.2; Kipper, Mrs. Thurnam, 97, Highbury New Park, N.5; Ludo, Mr. W. Rodwell, 75, Tradescant Road, S.W.8; Manora, Mr. G. W. Sealy, 19, Redcliffe Gardens, S.W.10; Peleus, Rev. P. Lewis, Ospringe Vicarage, Faversham; Roc, Mr. R. C. Oakley, Dunchurch Hall, Rugby; Silex, Mr. J. L. Wolferstan, 5, Princess Square, Plymouth; Ubique 1, Major Luard, 14, Woodlane, Falmouth; Ubique 2, Mr. W. G. Stirling, 7, Wilton Road, Bexhill-on-Sea; Yoko, Mr. F. Rawson, 19D, Pembridge Square, W.2; Zenas, Mr. F. S. Pilleau, 8, Meadow Way Green, Letchworth, Herts; Zyme, Mr. J. W. Pulsford, 107A, Brixton Hill, S.W.2.

PERPLEXITIES.

— By —
HENRY E. DUDENEY.

753.—ANOTHER CROSS-WORD VARIANT.

In this case I give the definitions of the words and their length, but do not indicate their locations. But it will be found that in every word, except the two-letter words, the position of at least one of the



letters is shown. Make a list of your probable and alternative words, then try fitting them in, and it will be found comparatively easy.

Definitions.—*2-letter Words:* An English weight. A body of people. A London postal district. Where you buy stamps. A legal degree. A useful article. The Southern Railway. Subject to Divine will. An exclamation. Our king. *3-letter Words:* Atmosphere. A small deer. A female deer. Artful. Side-bone of animals. Gained. "—— who must be obeyed." A health resort. Often under the feet. The same surname and title. Used for lighting. Lighted. A small island. On the human face. To strike gently. To gain. *4-letter Words:* Observed. A small bird. Joints from pigs. Pleased. Hurried. Enough. Poetic narrative in elevated style. Letter of Greek alphabet. *5 letter Words:* A tradesman. Made of oats. A weapon. City in Swiss canton of same name. A drunkard. Cuts. A tree. A great English admiral. To propel oneself. Ways in. Boundaries. Rent asunder.

754.—THE FLY AND THE MOTOR-CARS.

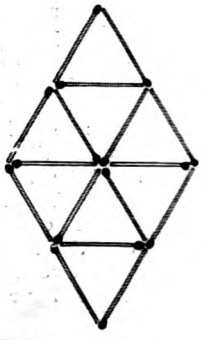
A road is 300 miles long. A motor-car, A, starts at noon from one end and goes throughout at 50 miles an hour, and at the same time another car, B, going uniformly at 100 miles an hour, starts from the other end together with a fly travelling 150 miles an hour. When the fly meets the car A it immediately turns and flies towards B. (1) When does the fly meet B? The fly then turns towards A and continues flying backwards and forwards between A and B. (2) When will the fly be crushed between the two cars if they collide and it does not get out of the way?

755.—DOUBLE-BARRELLED CONUNDRUMS.

Sometimes the answer to a conundrum is as perplexing as the conundrum itself. Here is one I was guilty of propounding a few years ago. What is the difference between the King and the North Star? The answer is nineteen shillings and elevenpence-three-farthings. But can you see why? Now, I was recently asked, When is a lark like a cat? And the answer was, When it purrs. Can you see it?

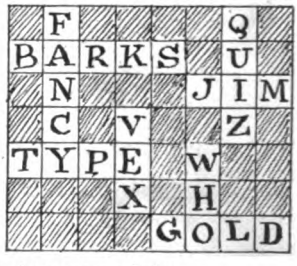
756.—A LITTLE MATCH PUZZLE.

Here is a little puzzle for the more juvenile reader. Place sixteen matches, as shown, to form eight equilateral triangles. Now take away four matches so as to leave only four equal triangles. No superfluous matches or loose ends to be left.



Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

748.—ANOTHER CROSS-WORD CURIOSITY.



Here is the correct solution.

749.—A MATCH-BOARDING ORDER.

The answer is, 8 pieces of 20 feet; 1 piece of 18 feet; and 7 pieces of 17 feet. Thus there are 16 pieces in all, measuring together 297 feet, in accordance with the conditions.

750.—AN ENIGMA.

The word is EYE.

751.—MISSING WORDS.

The words in their order are SLATE, TALES, STEAL, STALE, TALES, and LEAST.

752.—EASY DRAUGHTS.

Number the white squares 1 to 32, downwards in rows from left to right. Then play 26, 22, 11—25, 20, 16, and White wins.

The little Cherub Whispers

"There's a smile in every piece"

Mackintosh's Toffee de Luxe

Toffee de Luxe costs only ½d. more per oz. than ordinary toffee—and it's worth it!

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she would be spared everything which might dim the bright eyes or bow the straight back. But what love cannot avert, wisdom can lighten.

The wisdom of washing lies in the Rinso way, the cold-water way, which soaks out dirt and asks for no rubbing, no back-bending, no tax on time, youth, health or beauty.

Let her enter on life's duties with a smile, made confident by her knowledge of Rinso's help.

Rinso

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TEACH HER THE EASY RINSO WAY

In two sizes: Large carton for full-size wash: smaller carton for ordinary wash.

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